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PRIMUS IN INDIS

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A Romance.

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BY

M. J. COLQUHOUN.

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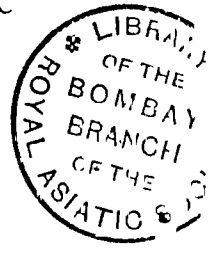

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

KX. C. 340

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL,
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WESTMINSTER:
PRINTED BY NICHOLS AND SONS,
25, PARLIAMENT STREET.

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PRIMUS IN INDIS.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KING'S SHILLING.

With an agony of anxiety in my heart I hastened on for letters to the Bull and Mouth Inn at Aldersgate. I asked on arriving if there was aught for Diggory Hogben, the name I had assumed. Three letters were given to me. I opened with feverish haste the one addressed to me in the adored writing of my dearest lady. She wrote:—

Sept. 8th, 1753.

"My dearest Life,

"I am truly glad you are, so far, safe in London, but how can I tell you how heart-

broken and distracted I am. My dear father is a prisoner! Oh! Nevill, if words of mine could tell you what I feel, for this evil is of my making. My kindest, most generous, and liberal of parents, is undone—and by me. I know he is innocent; he has ever been most loyal to the present Establishment, and yet, by my action in using his vessels to import arms, he appears most guilty; and through many other deeds of mine, (besides this matter of arms), he may be called to account. He has been conveyed prisoner to London. I am distracted by grief and remorse, and but for the kind sympathy of your mother, and the sensible advice and consolation of your cousin Gerard, I think I should go mad. I feel my whole life has been a cheat and deceit upon the kindest-hearted and most simple of men. Oh! Nevill, should my father's grey head take the place at Temple Bar of one we knew, I should never survive. To that one I was

loyal and true, but to my father how false I have been! I must tell you, much as I loved you, and still love you, that all is over between us, because in this frightful turn of affairs I have promised Gerard Ravensthorpe, should he be able to gain my father's pardon and liberty, that for so great a service I should think no reward too great—even to the sacrifice of my whole existence and happiness. My father's life and honour must be saved at whatever cost, and it seems that Gerard has great influence with the present Ministry.

"Your affectionate friend and servant,

"PATIENCE ORME."

"P.S. Send no more to me. I fear you may be discovered, for I am closely watched, and I would not be the cause of further misfortunes to you."

On reading this letter I felt like one stunned. I felt only anger against this weak, false, and fickle woman. I did not—I could

not—make sufficient allowances for her desperate position; I only knew she had abandoned me to wed my rival—the man I most hated and despised on earth.

My next letter was as follows:—

Sept. 8th, 1753.

"MY HONOURED SIR,

"I am very sensibly affected in writing you such ill news. Her ladyship, your mother, is dead; which melancholy tidings I look as my humble duty to send you. Her death has afflicted the whole parish as well as her poor servants, for we all loved her, I may say better than our lives.

"Indeed we were once in great hopes of her recovery—when Mistress Orme arrived—but this only proved a lightning before her death. As we most of us are grown grey-headed in our dear lady's service, she has left us pensions and legacies which we may live very comfortably upon the remaining part of our days.

"Her ladyship made a very good end, the last word she spoke being about your honour. 'Tell my sweet son—my dearest life ——'

"She is to be buried, according to her own wish, among her family in Northamptonshire.

"Her death, on the 6th September, was the melancholiest day for her servants and the poor that ever happened in Gloucestershire.

"This being from, my honoured sir,

"Your most sorrowful servant,

"THOMAS GREEN."

She was dead. My kind, sweetest mother; the best friend—the only friend I had in the world.

The third letter ran:—

September 8th, 1753.

"MY HONOURED SIR,

"The chief occasion of troubling your honour now is not my own griefs only, although they are very great. Firstly, they thought your worship had been killed also,

which God in his mercy prevented. That pert jacknapes, Timothy Slim, the innkeeper at Bourton, reported to Sir Samuel Huske, Knight, justice of the quorum, that as how your honour lay at an inn on the 2nd, and that, to his knowledge, you went to town; therefore they are searching for you in London with sad threatenings, saying they are resolved to have your honour's heart's blood.

"Your manor-house was burnt to the ground, eight of the rĕdcoats were slain, but your servants all escaped—as your honour ordered. Moreover, none of your property was preserved, saving such as mayhap was at Ravensthorpe.

"Your honour's father and cousin and several justices have ridden over to learn as how the mischief happened. Mistress Molly Bigge, your housekeeper, witnessed, and all the servant-wenches and men swore, that the soldiers set fire to the house in this wise.—The

redcoats piled up so great a many logs of dry wood on the hall fire, that the housekeeper said, 'Sergeant, they will burn the house down'; on which he answered, 'D——n your body and eyes.' Says she, 'I can run away from fire as quick as you can, sergeant.' Then he launched forth a volley of oaths, mixed with language not proper to be repeated, cursing her, and threw on more wood.

"The sweet Mistress Orme came also, but wept when she saw the black walls. Squire Orme has been took to London, but they say he will be tried at the assizes, for the justices will have it that he hired some villain to burn down your house.

"Your honour's most humble servant,

"DIGGORY HOGBEN."

I wandered that night in the open fields by Paddington with an unspeakable anguish in my soul, which I can never in my lifetime

feel again. There was a great storm, the rain fell in torrents, and I saw the dark outline of the hedgerow trees by the vivid flashes of lightning.

"Good God!" I cried, "have I lived to lose all in life!" I thought of suicide, for who has ever suffered deeply, or been wronged by those he most loved, without thinking of the rash remedy of despair. "Was I any party to the bargain," reasoned I, "when the curse of existence—the curse of an existence such as this—was put upon me?" What had I left to live for? I had nothing to love me, not even a dog. I was useless to the Jacobite cause, or any cause; outlawed, penniless, friendless. In the loss of my mother there was no bitterness; I had nothing for which to reproach myself, I had ever been dutiful to her; but to Cynthia my feelings had turned nearly to hatred; while against my father and Gerard Ravensthorpe I felt a deep and stern longing

for revenge. Though a fugitive and single-handed I would still live to outwit them; they should never have the satisfaction of seeing me behind prison bars or on a scaffold, or even know that they had nearly driven me to despair and suicide.

The next day I wandered aimlessly in the country, dined at the village of Islington, and then decided upon a line of action, and returned to London. I wrote a letter and despatched it at the post-office in Lombard Street; it was addressed to Mistress Orme.

Sept. 15th, 1753.

"MADAM,

"Since you are minded to marry Mr. Gerard Ravensthorpe, I wish you joy of your choice. This friend of the Ministry is no informer but a man of honour, fit to wed a woman of virtue.

"Your obedient servant,

"NEVILL RAVENSTHORPE."

Between the cost of the supper and the postage I had considerably reduced my coin, and I was almost penniless. I inquired for the noble Sergeant Flynn; I found him in a back room with three bold recruits.

As soon as the sergeant had become acquainted with my business, he became exceedingly cordial.

"Faith," he said, "you're a fine young fellow; you be a creditable addition to Colonel Adlercron's brave boys. Sit down, will ye, on the bench; take a pull at the pot, and a cut at the bread and bacon. It's not always in a soldier's life that there is victuals and drink on the board, or, for the matter of that, a board to take it on; but then there's the gay times when you feast on the best of the land, and ogle the prettiest women. Faith! if I suffered some hardships in the campaigns in the Low Countries and on the Rhine, and if I was laid low by a bad wound at Dettingen,

haven't I had more than consolation in the honour and glory since, and the smiles of the women? Faith! they stick to the redcoats."

The sergeant's words prevailed. I had taken the King's shilling and had enlisted. A change seemed coming over my ideas. Loyalty to England appeared to be prevailing over loyalty to my King. Immersed as I had been in the ardent hopes of political disaffection, and rejoicing in having been in the actual presence of the Prince, I had scarcely bestowed a thought upon the campaigns on the Continent between 1743 and 1748. In fact, as the British had only formed a contingent in an army of Hanoverians and Hessians, I had scarcely regarded the war as English; but now that I was in the company of one who had, as I presently found, served about ten years previously in the great battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy, I began to find a pure military ardour coming over me.

I eagerly inquired concerning the sergeant's experiences, and, nothing loth, he called for another pot, lighted a short clay pipe, and gave us confused accounts of incidents in battles, which generally terminated in some affair with a pretty Flemish or comely German wench. Finally, the solitary candle having burnt out, he conducted us recruits to our bedchambers. These, or rather this, consisted of a dry loft over stables, at the back of the inn. There was sufficient hay in it to furnish comfortable beds, and, with an eccentric mingling of elation at the prospect of adventure, regrets at lost love, and sensation of humiliation at my position, mingled with the glowing youthful impulses at the charm of novelty, I fell asleep in a snug corner of sweet hay.

My comrades had dropped into the arms of Morpheus even sooner than myself. A serving-man, cast off, probably, without a character

—a civil young ne'er-do-well, who had taken from necessity to the profession of arms—and a pedlar whose business had failed him—were my ex-honour's sleeping companions.

The sergeant, as an old soldier, had doubtless secured better quarters for himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN BARRACKS.

COLONEL ADLERCRON'S the 39th Regiment of British Infantry lay at Cork, preparatory to embarking for Madras; the first royal regiment which had been despatched to the East Indies.

When the excitement at enlisting and finding myself in such novel circumstances had abated, I realised the misery of my situation. Without money, without comforts of any kind, I had nothing to do but idle away the day in the neighbourhood of the

Bull and Mouth Inn, or accompany the sergeant, with ribbons in my hat, when he marched with drum and fife to Camberwell Green or elsewhere, to entice adventurous youth to carry arms in the East. The manners and general surroundings of those into whose company I was thrown inspired me with the deepest disgust; and the only alleviation was that I had made good friends with the sergeant, who constituted me a kind of corporal of his little band of recruits.

We had all been duly taken before the commissioned officer superintending the recruiting, and attested as soldiers. That officer had been pleased to observe that I was a smart young fellow, a compliment which, at the same time, flattered and humiliated me. Sergeant Flynn speedily noticed that I had received a different education to the rest of his recruits, and I told him a story about my father's losing his

money by unfortunate speculations in the west of England, and that I had changed my name for the nonce. Abominable as I considered my present condition it was preferable to the prison from which I had escaped; I only desired most earnestly to be out of London, and on the high seas.

My mother and Cynthia! these ever and anon returned to my reflections, and then for a time my misery would almost o'ermaster me, but with the elasticity of youth I became presently almost gay again. And as I maintained my position as the sergeant's leading recruit by administering a decided beating to a ruffianly fellow who had endeavoured to bully me, I was comparatively well situated. And I must confess that our homely meals of simple meat and bread and cheese, with mugs of beer, were relished by me with considerably more gusto than the banquets of these late years. Hunger prevailed over con-

siderations of eating off bare boards, and thirst imparted to small beer the finest flavour.

Sergeant Flynn promised that I should soon exchange the musket for the dignity of the sergeant's halberd, when I joined the regiment; and I concluded to make the best of inevitable circumstances.

Happily for me recruits came in sufficiently fast. The batches collected by Sergeant Flynn and others were in about a week ordered to be embarked on a vessel in the Thames, to sail for Cork. The idea of the sea, with its freedom, its freshness, made my spirits buoyant as its waves. But I speedily found there was not much freedom or freshness of air in a great part of the sea-life of a batch of recruits. We were stuffed down into the hold of our small vessel for the first portion of the voyage, with the hatches battened down, as the weather became stormy. The

darkness, the stench of the low, hot space between decks are indescribable. I was not so ill as the majority of my companions, though this was my first voyage; still for a time I should have esteemed it as a favour if anybody had thrown me overboard. However the weather improved, and we were allowed on deck to assist the sailors in hauling at the ropes; the undermanned crew having been much exhausted by two days of severe weather. In the Thames we had been sent below, to be out of the way. At length, however, as we ran along the coast, I obtained some enjoyment from the sea. The wind was well on the brig's quarter. The old vessel was dashing the spray up from her weather bow, and, beyond the curling, green, foam-crested waves, were the white cliffs and green uplands, the last I should see of my native country.

Having made myself useful in assisting the

sailors, and partly owing to the sergeant doing what he could for me, I found myself allowed to remain on deck.

We disembarked at Cork, and my haughty spirit had sufficient discretion to make the best of the discipline of a barrack. During the two months which elapsed before we embarked for India I underwent the trials and humiliations incidental to the state of all recruits, but especially felt by myself, who had aspired to charge, *en cavalier*, like a second Rupert, in the cause of the Stuart king.

I was drilled to the marching, and I learned, amongst awkward rustics, who continually kept myself and others back, the numerous motions of the manual and platoon exercises. I was duly habited in a red coat with green facings, and the skirts doubled back to a button in the centre, a red waistcoat and breeches, high white gaiters, buff

belts, and a hat with a white binding. I found that between shaving, powdering and greasing my head, and cleaning my accoutrements, I had little time to think in other than the desultory mood which might accompany these operations. But Sergeant Flynn had still befriended me. He had said a good word for me to the captain of my company. The captain had taken pains to investigate my qualities, and I found myself rapidly advanced from drilled-recruit to the rank of corporal; and thence, before we embarked, to sergeant, with a sword at my side instead of a bayonet, and a crimson sash, I again conceived myself a gentleman, and I shouldered my halberd, in exchange for the musket, with enormous satisfaction, and began to imagine that a general's commission, and revenge upon Gerard, were within the actual range of mental vision.

The life of the regiment was so full of action

that I could not think long or consecutively. Visions of the grand and picturesque sedateness of Ravensthorpe, of my sweet mother, of my ever-adored Cynthia, and of the many respected dependents of the house, would come into my mind; when the cheery roll of the drums, and lively accompaniment of the fifes, would again arouse me to immediate action. But I seemed to be in a dream, I seemed to be another self to the Nevill Ravensthorpe of Ravensthorpe.

I was not altogether free from apprehension that my identity might be discovered, and that I might have to exchange the barrack for a prison. Drills, and the many occupations of a menial nature, necessary in the private soldier's life, appeared agreeable, by comparison, to such a fate.

As a sergeant I almost seemed to return again to the position of a gentleman, for I had to command as well as to obey. And

the commissioned officers, with their half-pikes and gold lace, were also subject to discipline.

The soldiers, taken altogether, were a fine, honest set of men, though somewhat too much disposed to drink whenever they found opportunity. I had managed to keep on good terms with the men of my company.

The barracks at Cork are built on the top of a great hill. One evening when I was on duty, placing sentries at their posts outside the great mass of white buildings, a man addressed me.

"Your honour, I would have a word with you," he said.

"Begone!" I cried, knowing it was a breach of orders to speak while on duty.

"I have a letter from the lady, my dear sir."

"Silence! Diggory," I cried. "I may not speak to you now."

He stood irresolute and perplexed. The

night was so dark that it was more by his tall broad figure, clad in brown homespun, and even still more by his familiar Gloucestershire accent, that I recognised my foster brother.

"Good Diggory," I said, "begone! but I will meet you anon at the sign of the Pelican and Trumpet."

That night I reached the tavern, the resort of many men of my regiment. I entered the low-roofed, oak-panelled room; each table was separated from its neighbour by a high partition, the floor was cleanly sanded, and the atmosphere was dense with tobacco smoke. At a table sat my tenant's son; he rose and uncovered himself with an air of respect to which I had long been a stranger.

"Honoured sir," he began, but I placed my fingers upon my lips as a warning, for I perceived that many soldiers of my regiment were present and might hear him.

I was astonished that he had undertaken so long and perilous a journey.

"Where is the letter?" asked I.

He placed a thick document, addressed in the much loved and familiar writing of Cynthia, in my hand.

I could hardly open it from the conflicting feelings which tore my soul. I saw it was a long letter, so I determined to read it at a more private place.

"My honest friend, right glad I am to see you. How made you the voyage?" said I.

He explained that he had come by a French brig from Bristol.

"The sweet Mistress Orme," said Diggory, "thought that a special messenger would be the only safe way to send to you. Here are your honour's rents,"—the worthy fellow took a large bag of money out of his capacious pocket—and also he said, lowering his voice, "Your valet has packed all your wardrobe,

and your butler sent much other property from Ravensthorpe. It is all on board the French brig Mistress Orme has chartered to convey you to France, and the brig is lying in the offing."

I was surprised, but began to reflect sadly that, having taken the King's shilling, to sail away without leave would be considered the serious military crime of desertion, and that to buy my discharge might be difficult, and at a few hours' notice quite impossible.

"The French brig sails to-night, the captain cannot stop another day, and he is to meet your honour here directly, to make final arrangements for your journey."

Soon after a stout dark man in the dress of a sailor entered, he wore earrings in his ears. I recognised him at once as the sailor Cynthia had fetched from Lambeth. The sight of him awoke all the sad memories of happier days.

In rather broken English, the Frenchman told me that if I were in readiness he had a boat and crew waiting for me at a short distance from the harbour, and that he would take me on board. The temptation being strong, I elected to desert from Colonel Adlercron's regiment. Just as we had settled this; all the soldiers in the tavern sprang to their feet, for ringing through the air came the well-known bugle sounds of "the company call," and then "the assembly." We knew we were summoned back to barracks for some emergency. The men rushed into the street, and as I was obliged to accompany them my chance of escape was gone.

I thought it the greatest mischance then, but since I am satisfied it was to my advantage.

When we reached the barracks all was in the bustle of preparation, the men packing their knapsacks, and rolling up their great-coats. In an hour two companies were

marching along the road to quell a bread riot at the townlet of Ballcryst, and I was in my place alongside my company. We were absent three days. When I returned, I went to the Pelican and Trumpet, but there was no sign of Diggory Hogben. I went down to the harbour and scanned the shipping in the offing—there was no trace of the French brig.

I heard some disquieting news when I made inquiries of some fishermen on the wharf. They said that a stranger in a brown suit—a strong-built fellow—had been taken overnight by the press-gang. That, being burly and active, he fought hard with his captors, but, in spite of his struggles, he had been put in a boat and taken out to sea.

If it were not for my dear lady's letter I should have fancied the whole thing a dream, for I was still a sergeant in King George's service.

Misstress Patty Orme wrote as follows:—

"December 10th, 1753.

"MY DEAREST LIFE,

"By your last letter I saw you are beyond measure angered with me. My dear Nevill, let not bitter feeling estrange our hearts, and rob us of that love which alone makes the consolation of our lives. Seas and lands may divide us, fate may be adverse, but let us not be separated in spirit—which is the greatest separation of all. Believe me, dear Nevill, that your love is more to me than all else in life, and without it I am the most heart-broken of women.

"By inquiries I have made, I discovered that you had enlisted as a private in Adlercron's regiment, as a means of hiding for a time. This was the wisest step you could have taken, for your enemies, in hunting for you, will hardly expect to find you in the service of King George.

"I have arranged with Captain Surcouf of St. Malo—who in his brig, the Doutelle, has already managed the rescue of many Royalists —to land you at St. Malo; from which place you must post to Paris, where the Law family will receive you. Law of Lauriston, who is well thought of at the French Court, will obtain you a commission in the King of France's service. When my father is released I will come to you.

"For myself, I am still with my father, who is a prisoner in the Tower. I sleep outside; still I am permitted to live with him and dine with him. This sad duty of attending him I most gladly perform, knowing that he is innocent, while I alone am the cause of his imprisonment.

"Gerard Ravensthorpe is my humble servant. I know for certain now that he caused your arrest, considering that if you were effectually removed he might have a fair

opportunity of ingratiating himself with my father and me.

"Think no ill of me, dear love, that I dissemble with him. At the time when my father was arrested I was like one distraught. Gerard tuned his arguments with so much wit to my distracted mind, that, in a fit of foolish impulse (I ever act without sufficient thought), I agreed to all—to anything he had to say—but, now that I have become calmer, never will I marry this abandoned man; for from my heart I despise him and his ways, and when I think of the wrong he has done you I hate him beyond measure.

"Forgive me and still love me; this is all I ask of you.

"My father has now a high opinion of Gerard, and for certain he is a man of parts. Your cousin is well received at St. James's, and is known to all the Whig men of quality, to many leading lawyers, doctors, men of letters,

and divines, to say nothing of scores of men and women of fashion; therefore he brings us daily the news of the town; this cheers my father, and he hopes, besides, through Gerard's powerful friends, to interest influential people in his trial, which is still pending.

"Gerard your cousin, having succeeded in making so many friends in this city, believes that, now you are out of the way he will be able to prevail with me! Being much admired by a Whig Duchess, he considers himself not incapable of captivating the fair sex, notwithstanding the deformities of his figure. His dress is now exceedingly handsome, and his countenance, indeed, (putting out of consideration the thin lips and cynical smile), is not ill-favoured. His forehead, nose and chin, are classical in their outline, and he is able to regard himself in the mirror, as he frequently does, as a very pretty fellow.

"I can never forget you, dear Nevill, you

who have every virtue, and are the handsomest and noblest man I have ever met. But, dear friend, until my father is free, I cannot wound him by a word of unfilial opposition.

"The house of Ravensthorpe is now Whig, for your father kissed hands at the last Birthday.

"Your affectionate friend and obedient servant,

"PATIENCE ORME."

It was at this time that I began to suspect I was being watched by an informer. A long-visaged man in a brownish black coat and very dirty shirt appeared daily at the Pelican and Trumpet Tavern. Mr. Boothe, for so he was called, came from London, and some said he was a bailiff. His only occupation seemed to be to read the newspapers, and he used to dictate to his hearers with great authority on the news of the day. Although I avoided him and answered surlily, still he would ask my

opinion with much politeness, and would wish to take a glass with me, always drinking to my health; yet I had great reason to believe this genteelest gentleman wished to assist me to the gallows.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SEA, 1754.

THE order to sail arrived. It might have given me extreme pleasure to receive it, as, once on ship-board, I should be beyond the machinations of my cousin Gerard, Mr. Boothe, and people of his kidney; but then one thing kept my whole heart in England, and that was love for the Lady Cynthia. On the 7th January, 1754 I marched down to the place of embarkation with my company. It was with a sad heart I mounted the ship's ladder, because I had not received

a second letter from Mistress Orme, and, what was even more melancholy was the reflection that I could not now hear again from her for more than one whole year. And a year's silence to a lover seemed an eternity.

That voyage appears to me now as a dream. Our ship was one of seven sail; as it was a time of peace we did not require a convoy, and we were sufficiently armed to defend ourselves against pirates.

I will not enter into the particulars of that voyage; we suffered from the usual storms and calms. At the Equator the ship continued for weeks with flapping sails, and favourable winds seemed for ever departed. Then a violent storm drove us into the harbour of Bahia da Todos Santos. We remained there for several weeks for repairs and to take in fresh provisions; and while there I was often allowed to land. Of that remote

country I retain vivid recollections, especially of the Churches and Convents, and of those fair nuns we were allowed to speak with through the gratings of their nunneries.

At length, after being at sea a year, we landed at Madras. How well I remember our canoe, or native boat, plunging through the boiling surf, loaded with a division of my company. On landing, I stood leaning on my halbert awaiting the command to fall in, and, as I viewed the strange buildings, the delicious green masses of foliage, the crowd of black men, I reflected that, though I had landed there a humble sergeant, yet in this new land I would find either a grave or a fortune, and, if Fate were propitious, I would make for myself a name worthy of Cynthia. And that even, if she proved false to me (but that was impossible), still she should say: "There was something in that man Nevill Ravensthorpe,

whose heart I trifled with, broke, and then threw away, which was not unworthy of my regard!"

At Madras, in 1755, I was much surprised to hear the name of Law of Lauriston, and that coupled with many ill-words, continually on the lips of my comrades. I knew that he was an officer in the French service, and now it appeared that in India he was Captain-General of the King of France's forces.

I had long ago discovered that Adlercron's regiment was not content with beating the French in battle, but they must needs scold at them in peace.

At Madras I heard continually of "French rascality," "French rapacity," "French grimaces." The men in Adlercron's would say: "The Monseers had not the wit and good breeding of the English. D——n the parly-vous and all that belong to them:"

and we were all dying "to have a slice at the Monseers." I had been at Madras some months, when, one evening at dusk, while I was out walking, alone, a meanly-dressed native approached me. He placed in my hands, silently, a mysteriously small parcel, a bag barely larger in size than a letter; this little packet was worked in thread of gold upon a green satin ground. After inspecting it with wonder, I remembered that this was the manner of the country in sending letters to people of rank, and that this splendid outer-covering might contain an epistle.

On opening the bag I found a letter, unsigned, but which I knew, from the hand-writing, to be from Law of Lauriston, and it ran as follows :—

"Shahghur, February, 1755.

"SIR,

"I have been informed, by one who is your sincere well-wisher, that you are at this pre-

sent time serving as a common soldier in the army of the Elector of Hanover, a position of deep degradation to a gentleman of your spirit and honour.

"Should you wish to mend your fortunes, and at the same time gain an opportunity of revenging yourself upon your enemies—those vindictive Whigs—I will obtain for you an ensign's commission under the King of France. One Dalston, a free merchant, who will shortly visit Madras, will discover to you a scheme how you can best rejoin me in the Deccan, which it might be dangerous to make known to you by letter.

"For the mending of your estate, and to enable you once more to take up your position as a person of quality, I am glad to inform you that your money, clothes, and plate, books, and much other property, have been delivered to my care at Chandernagore by Captain Surcouf, of the brig Dontelle, which

moneys and goods I hope to make over to you when you escape into French territory, either in the Deccan or in Bengal.

"I am, dear sir,

"Your esteemed friend,

"L."

The letter disturbed me much, for if I cared not to serve the Elector of Hanover I cared still less to serve the King of France; but yet I waited with feverish anxiety to hear what this Dalston might have to propose.

Some months after, by the ordinary course of the post, I received a letter which filled me with the wildest delight.

"The Factory of Calcutta, 1755, Oct 12th,

"SIR, "Bengal.

"You will be pleased to hear that some of my afflictions are at an end by the arrival of my father and myself in Bengal. In all that has happened I have suffered more than you; indeed I have suffered so much in body and mind that I have felt as one distraught. You

have had a clear conscience, but ah! Nevill, too late I remembered my duty to my dear father. He remained in the Tower for one year untried, when, through the good offices of friends at court, he was released; but we, in fortune, were well nigh ruined. The legal charges, and various gifts we had made to people of influence, crippled our estate; but what completed our ruin was that my father's mercantile affairs fell into confusion through the dishonesty of some and the incapacity of others of his agents. The Buckland New Cross estate and house were sold to His Grace of Porchester, though at a figure which in no way repaid the large sums which my father had expended upon them; and then your cousin Gerard, who loved the rich heiress and not honest Patty Orme, called one morning, bowed politely, and refused to marry this country wench."

"Scoundrel! knave!" I muttered, "shall I

never be revenged upon him for all the evils he has forced upon me?"

"Ah, but Nevill," wrote the lady, "how glad I was to be released and rid of him. He jilted me and wedded the Lady Betty Chester. 'Tis true her fortune was but small, but with her he acquired rank and influence, which his ambitious mind valued as equal to money, and he gained likewise the respect and regard of his neighbours. Through his Grace of Porchester's influence, and his own unceasing intrigues, he obtained a good place as an under-secretary to those sordid knaves of Whigs, and where doubtless his subtle tongue and keen wit would have procured him still higher advancement, but in the end his success availed him nought, for he was killed in a duel by Sir John Joddrell."

I was deeply moved to hear of the death of one who from envy and self-interest had been my bitter enemy.

"May God have mercy on his soul!" I ejaculated.

"Honest Diggory, since his disappearance at Cork, I have been unable to trace; he must have been pressed into the navy, but you have heard how through the honesty of that brave and excellent sailor Captain Surcouf of St. Malo, your property and money have arrived in India, and they will I hope assist you greatly to better your fortunes.

"In Bengal I am as happy as any one can be whose memory is clouded with terrible scenes. Nevill! I cannot forget the past, and, though I can never be yours, I never forget to pray and to think of your safety and welfare.

"My father lives in the Indian manner, and before he returned to England he was allied to a Moorish gentlewoman. This I have known all my life, and for my half-brothers and sisters I have a sincere affection. His wife is an amiable and virtuous woman, belonging to

a considerable family. I live behind high walls, still I have my private apartments, and my father gives me every indulgence which his good heart prompts, nor am I debarred from all society and amusement, as among the senior and junior factors of this Factory and their ladies there are many people of worth and merit.

"I charge you write no more to me—at present, at least—and seek not to see me again, for I have promised my father, the best of men, that I will never again see or converse with you. This promise I have most sölemnly given, and shall most inviolably keep. My father has not expressly forbidden my writing, yet that may be an omission from forgetfulness, ör it perhaps is included in the word conversing. A promise with me is a very sacred thing, and is to be extended to everything understood from it, as well as what is expressed by it. The old

friendship that once happily existed between our families prompts me to think I am justified in telling you such matters of moment to you as the death of your kinsman, the sad disappearance of honest Diggory, and the fact that your property in valuables is now in a place of safety.

"Believe this, that I shall always think of you as I think you deserve, and am, sir,

"Your obliged servant,

"PATIENCE ORME."

"P.S.—Should Dalston the free merchant seek you at Madras, put every confidence in him. He is a man of courage and honour, the sincere friend of him whom I so deeply loved and respected, and will I think, be able to render you much service."

It took me a long time to read this letter. I experienced a feeling of both grief and joy. I was overjoyed to hear that she whom I loved was still free, or at least not married to that

villain Gerard, and, although in words she renounced me at her father's bidding, I could still hope—the only panacea left to the unfortunate. Better days and brighter might arise, and I now awaited with great impatience the arrival of this stranger called Dalston.

At Madras, every martial breast, nay every English heart, heaved with rage against the French. This bitter detestation was due to the fact that this people, aided by the Moors, had, ten years before, taken the fort of Madras from the British, had ruined our trade, and had absolutely driven us to our ships, and had all but succeeded in expelling us from this part of India. Not satisfied with having done us so much evil, they were again intriguing with the natives of the country, and doing us all the ill which lay in their power.

In the year 1755, though nominally at peace, the British and the French in Madras

hated each other intensely, and despised each other cordially.

The novelty of my surroundings, and this new life, prevented my brooding over my misfortunes, added to this I had the elasticity of youth, therefore I was not unhappy at Madras. I respected both the officers and my fellow-sergeants of the 39th Regiment. Among these last, in spite of certain prejudices of my education, I discovered that a brave and honest heart may beat under a fustian coat.

One thing which added much to my contentment was to find in a Company's regiment, called the Madras Regiment, many men who, like myself, were unfortunate gentlemen. Some had been ruined by Jacobite loyalty, and some by gambling, cock-fighting and horse-racing. Among the gamesters there was Compton—who afterwards obtained a commission—Deering of a Kentish family, who met a soldier's death at Plassy.

Among the Jacobites were Drummond a Scotchman, Fitzgerald an Irishman, both of whom preferred soldiering in Madras to slavery in the West Indies. Deering and Fitzgerald had taken part in the late campaigns. They had served in the siege of Arkat, the great battle of Kaveripak, and many other engagements; and they were never weary of narrating, nor I of listening to, their strange tales and adventures.

According to Deering, the French Captain-General, Law of Lauriston, was a good soldier, and, at one time, had inflicted some heavy defeats upon the British. They considered he might be more than a match for any ordinary commander, but said that he had been out-marched, out-manœuvred, and most utterly defeated by the greatest military genius of the age, and for that matter, of any age, namely, by Robert Clive, who at the age of only twenty-two, had been our General at Madras.

I bore my new position in a new world with philosophy, even with pleasure, and this was because, poor deluded mortal, I was intoxicated by the wildest hopes. Humble as my actual position was, I painted to myself a great future.

The very name and history of this Robert Clive, of whom my comrades never ceased to talk, haunted and encouraged me. He, as I, had arrived in Madras a poor and friendless youth. In ten years he had gained a large fortune, a King's commission, and that too of the rank of full colonel. He had driven the French from the country of Madras, and had defeated them in numberless encounters. Ah! Robert Clive! He also had married the lady he loved, had returned to England, had been well received at Court, and by the public, though the royal patronage was an honour I did not envy him; for never would I kiss the hand of King George II.

Hope whispered to me, why should Destiny not have something in store for you also, Nevill Ravensthorpe? In ten years or less, you also may make a fortune and a mark in the world." Discretion might have however suggested "You, Nevill Ravensthorpe, are no great military genius;" but Hope remains to us poor mortals when all pleasing realities are fled, we endure the present by believing the future will repay us, and we never altogether lose heart, by thinking of the time when "our luck," as we put it, will change.

"Luck," "Fate," "Fortune," all words and signs by which we cheat ourselves to submit to the otherwise unendurable. To fail in a great object—and this I had experienced—is Hell. The men and the Cause which I had joined heart and soul, had failed.

In attaching myself to the Stuarts I had indeed espoused a lost cause. People with more wisdom and caution than I had possessed,

such as Gerard or Squire Ravensthorpe, had seen that the house of Hanover was too strongly established to be overthrown; still even then, in spite of all I had suffered, if either my fortune, my time, my thought, my intellect, my last drop of blood, or my last gasp of life, could have helped to establish the hapless Charles Edward on the throne which was his by birth-right, I would have given them all freely for him.

But now a new loyalty seemed to possess me. I could not, I dared not, even for the King over the Water, join the French, the enemies of England, and bear arms against my fellow-countrymen, as Law of Lauriston was doing. We were therefore now in opposite camps.

The hot weather, with its plagues of fevers, boils, and prickly heat, passed away, and then the rains succeeded. They were welcome at first, but depressing when the sickness in the

regiment increased alarmingly from the damp heat and evil smells.

All ranks drank deeply, and gambled to the extent of their means; and then at length the cooler season returned, and our drills increased, but still there remained the monotony, eating away my soul with rust, especially as I counted the days when I could hear again from Cynthia, or before Dalston could arrive. I felt restless and undecided—should I leave Adlercron and serve the King of France? It might better my fortunes, but I revolted from the idea of becoming a traitor to my country. I never would have entertained the thought for one minute only that Archibald Law had been in the French service, and that I also should join it, might be the wish of Mistress Orme.

On the 15th November, 1755, I was walking in the bazaars of the Black Town, when a well-dressed Moor stopped at the shop in which I was making some purchases.

There was something familiar to me in the ring of his voice, and I thought I had seen the slender, tall, and yet powerfully-built figure before; but what was my amazement, when I saw his face, to recognise Law of Lauriston. The large white turban he wore, and his long beard, were a complete disguise; besides this, he looked more than twenty years older than when I had seen him in England. His form was emaciated, his face wrinkled and careworn, but I was the less shocked at these changes, having observed the deadly nature of the Indian climate to some constitutions, and knowing also the many hardships and campaigns Law had undergone since we had met.

"Ravensthorpe," said he in a low voice, "I have long wished to see you, but did not dare to attract attention. I am encamped in the suburbs of this town; ask for Dalston's camp. I would speak with you privately. I cannot stay now."

"In charity, sir, before you leave, tell me what news you have of the Lady Cynthia."

I cannot express how strange it seemed to me, to be asking him that question in an Eastern bazaar, and on the surf-beaten coast of India, the very question I had asked him years before in Westminster.

Law's eyes flashed with that cold steely glance which made his eyes terrible in anger.

"The lady is well. I have seen her lately. Giles Orme grows wealthy, and Mistress Patty Orme has turned Whig."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN BENGAL.

I OBTAINED leave of absence, and made my way to the suburbs of the town.

I soon reached a clump of trees, and under the shade of this thickly-planted grove I saw an encampment of large tents, such as are used only by men of quality or officers of high rank. From one of the many handsomely dressed servants who were in waiting I inquired for "Dalston Sahib."

I was led into one of the finest tents; in it I found a tall, well-dressed Moor.

"May I ask your business, sir?" he said, addressing me in English.

He was dark and swarthy, like one of the Indian people. I was at a loss what to answer him, not knowing under what circumstances or under what name Mr. Law was, in British territory, or if he wished to be discovered. This awkward silence ended by Law himself joining us.

"Allow me to present you, sir, to Mr. Dalston," said he, introducing me to the man I had taken for a Moor; "it was through Mr. Dalston's munificence that my luckless cousin Archibald Law regained his liberty from Barbary."

Mr. Dalton shortly retired and left us alone.

Law asked me if I proposed accepting a French commission.

This I at once refused absolutely. He seemed unable to understand my reason.

"And yet, Ravensthorpe," said he, "you were once the firm adherent of the White Cockade. Good God!" cried he, excitedly pacing up and down the tent, "and how maddening it is to think how nearly they succeeded. If they had but marched on from Derby, one more victory, and the Cause was gained. You stand hesitating, Ravensthorpe, and yet you saw the death agonies of Archibald Law; and his ignominious end was only the same as that of hundreds of other loyal hearts. When you think of these victims how can you still serve King George and the Hanoverians? Shame on you! I thought you were made of sterner stuff."

But I answered sullenly:

"'As I hope to be saved,' I would die a

thousand deaths sooner than serve with the French against my country."

"You have gone too far to draw back; as an obscure soldier or sergeant you escape notice, but once arrive (if you ever do), at the position of a commissioned officer, your birth and history must become known. You will find yourself in danger from those vindictive Whigs, and your want of fortune will place you in a painful position among your equals. If you obstinately refuse employment in the French service, then I recommend you to become a free merchant."

"Surely to bear arms, even as a private, is more in character with the birth and education of a gentleman," cried I, "than to turn trader! Of trade I know nothing, nor wish I to learn anything."

"You must judge for yourself, but when I discoursed with Mistress Orme, who takes the warmest interest in your career—although

she is turned Whig—we were of opinion it was the best thing for you to do."

"Would you have me become a shopkeeper? What is the life of a free trader?" For, although I did not know exactly the work of these people, I knew that among the factors of Madras they were not much respected.

"Mr. Dalston, it appears, is willing to allow you to join in his travels and adventures. As his companion, you will need the use of your sword more than of your pen; your pistols will keep accounts far better than your ledger; and it is a line of life in which you may quickly and honestly acquire wealth."

"A life of danger and action is all I ask"; for I was beginning to be weary of the monotony of my barrack life, and the prospect of wealth held out to me was tempting. With a fortune I might aspire

to gain Mistress Orme's hand; but yet to leave Adlercron's regiment, to begin a new life, was not altogether pleasing to me. It was to break for once and for ever with my dreams and phantasies of being a great captain; for I still felt that I was suited for the life of a soldier. Moreover I could not leave my comrades or my officers without regret. I had found a home in Colonel Adlercron's regiment.

Law unfolded to me that Dalston had a scheme of collecting a large armed caravan; that he would first travel to the court of the Great Mogul, and then by Persia, through Aleppo, reach the Grand Signor's dominions. He added that Dalston had already performed this journey in coming to India, and had made a large fortune by trade during this bold enterprise. Law then confided to me that to carry out these far-extended schemes we must for this

venture collect, in the settlement of Calcutta, English broadcloth and other merchandise. He said that it would be necessary in doing this to elude the vigilance of the East India Company, who had the sole right to trade in India. Moreover that, should we be discovered, we should be imprisoned and re-shipped to England; but that, owing to the precautions Dalston would take, this part of the risk was but trifling, and that afterwards our danger would be small and the trading profits enormous.

My imagination was fired by the prospect of such an adventurous journey, especially with such an experienced companion as Mr. Dalston, who had travelled in many lands; for Law had explained to me that Dalston had himself once been a slave in Morocco, and had lived both in Turkey and in Spain. He was very wealthy, and so

thoroughly versed in the languages and customs of the Moors that he passed in India as one of that people.

I said I would reflect upon what was proposed, but as Dalston, who had joined us, and Law both impressed upon me that it was Mistress Orme's wish that I should accept this strange offer, I felt much tempted to do so.

After twenty-four hours' reflection I decided to throw in my fortunes with Dalston, although I felt a singular regret at leaving Adlercron's. I was actuated by the desire of making a fortune, for what Law had said about the difficulty of my ever obtaining a commission had struck me as true. I myself wished to go, besides I believed I was following the wishes of Lady Cynthia and she was the one object of my life, But what turned the balance and foolishly weighed down all other obstacles against.

the project was, the hope that shortly I should leave for Calcutta, and there see Mistress Orme. To behold her face once more and to hear her sweet voice were pleasures for which I could have faced a thousand deaths! And these delights would have steeled my heart against listening to any prudent warnings of the dangers and risks of such a journey. But who, at my age, would have counted up perils and bad fortunes and not have acted as I did? Who would have stopped as a private at Madras when the prospect of seeing Prester John, the Great Mogul, and the Grand Signor, had been offered to him? I was only childishly anxious to start at once.

The lieutenant of my company, Weldon by name, a poor but most meritorious officer, aged sixty, spoke to the captain of my company, who was wealthy and young; and through their good offices I was per-

mitted to purchase my discharge. Colonel Adlercron might have refused this favour, as the regiment was on foreign service, but Lieutenant Weldon, who knew I was a gentleman, pressed the matter, and I was allowed to leave.

Dalston had chartered a ship of the country to make the voyage. It was a native craft, with large lateen sails.

As the sea was calm, and the wind was favourable, we made a rapid run of ten days across the Bay of Bengal, and I enjoyed not only the fresh sea-air but the prospect of seeing Mistress Orme.

Alas! not however, when we landed, for I well knew that we were to disembark in French territory, but, as I should be but seventy miles from her, I trusted to some lucky chapter of accidents, or to my own courage and address, to effect a meeting with my dearest lady.

We reached the shores of Bengal, and we were gliding along in a light breeze up a river, when we passed a large English vessel anchored until the wind should increase, or the tide turn, to enable her to continue the ascent of the stream. I naturally gazed upon the ship with interest, more especially as lounging upon the poop were two or three feminine figures, one of which appeared to possess peculiar grace.

"Heavens and earth!" was my exclamation. "What in the name of Heaven do I behold?" There, actually leaning over the ship's side, with a straw hat on her head, was Cynthia. Her attention had been as naturally attracted to the quaint native vessel as mine had been to the English ship. She, of course, noticed the three seemingly Moorish figures in the Indian craft, but my eyes met hers, and I knew that she recognised us—or at least me.

We were at no greater distance than might have sufficed for a piece of ship's biscuit to be thrown from one to the other.

As we glided by my presence of mind seemed lost, else I should have cried out to our sailors to run our vessel alongside. I only, however, waved my handkerchief.

Cynthia looked pale and seemed to start in utter amazement, then she waved her hand, and afterwards, as we slowly passed, she also waved a white kerchief. I felt that I ought to jump overboard and swim to her, rather than pass her thus.

Law and Dalston had also been equally attracted by looking at the ship, and had recognised its fair passenger.

"Good God! Ravensthorpe," cried Dalston, "stop that signalling to the lady, you will attract the attention of the crew; we have to slip pass the Fort of Calcutta at night

and unobserved. It is unlucky we have fallen in with this ship, the Duke of Grafton I see it is called; but if the marvel was ever seen in this world of a woman who can keep a secret or is discreet, sure that woman is Mistress Orme. However, better than all secrets and all discretion, we shall have passed Calcutta long before that lumbering hulk arrives there to anchor in port."

"For my part, I care no longer to trust Mistress Patty with my secrets since she has become the most arrant Whig," said Law. "I cannot think you were very prudent to do your best to attract notice to our craft," he continued to me.

For my part I knew that I could not have passed without saluting Mistress Orme, who was the magnet which attracted me to Bengal, no, not even if I were to be killed that minute for it; however, I felt I had no

right to endanger my companions, so I made no reply. We kept out of sight in the ship's cabin after this as long as we were in British territory, and early the next morning we arrived safely, and anchored before the French settlement of Chandernagore.

CHAPTER XX.

AT CHANDERNAGORE, 1755.

On disembarking I observed that the French settlement had a clean and cheerful air. A broad esplanade shaded by trees ran alongside the river; beyond that rose the long curtain walls and high bastions of the Fort d'Orleans; besides this, the Governor's fine residence, the Church, and the Court-House could be seen. I noticed also, with no small surprise, on a fine public Mall many gentlemen walking with women of quality, as I

judged them to be from the handsome dresses in which they appeared.

The men wore laced silk coats, rapiers, red-heeled shoes, and three cornered hats surmounted their elaborately dressed wigs, while the ladies in their hoops, powdered heads, and carrying their fans, appeared to me the most beautiful of mortals.

We proceeded on foot to the residence, which was near at hand, of the French Governor, M. Renault de St. Germain. He received us most hospitably, accosting Mr. Dalston and me with marked politeness, while he greeted Mr. Law with the greatest cordiality.

That evening there was to be an assembly and a reception of all the principal residents, of the ladies, and all the officers of the garrison, to do honour to Mr. Law.

I wore a blue and gold suit and a dress rapier, with diamond buckles in my shoes.

I was indeed rejoiced to find myself again in the garb of a gentleman, and associating with people of birth and breeding, after having experienced all the roughness of barrack-room life and the horrors of the cock-pit on board a ship; although I do not wish to forget the good qualities I discovered among my late companions.

Equipped in my full dress, and feeling not a little vain and elated of my handsome suit, accompanied by Mr. Law, I presented myself at the ball. The Governor's rooms were large, stately, and brilliantly lighted by many chandeliers, full of wax candles, and the music struck up a merry tune. The older people of the company were playing cards, while the officers and ladies were dancing. I could not help remembering that when last I had been in so gay a company it was at my coming of age, when I danced a minuet at Ravensthorpe with Mistress

Patty Orme. This could hardly fail to awaken certain melancholy reflections in my breast.

The thought which was uppermost in my heart ever since I had landed in Bengal was, how I should gain an interview with the Lady Cynthia; this so completely absorbed me that I hardly sufficiently rejoiced in the happy change in my situation; however, chancing to meet Mr. Law in the ball-room, I asked his advice by what means I could best see Mistress Orme.

"To a prudent man," said he, "I should advise that you should abandon all idea of seeing her again."

"My dear sir," cried I, "can you have the barbarity to recommend such a course to a lover, to one who is so completely her humble servant as I am!"

"In advising you, my dear Nevill," said he, "I am aware that the virtue of prudence

is not to be found in your breast, but after all the evils you have endured it ought to have taught you to act with caution. As your friend I must tell you that in seeking the Lady Cynthia in Calcutta you would be acting the part of a madman. Dalston may have to visit Calcutta on the furthering of his trading prospects, but then he will pass, as he well can, for an Arabian merchant, and will have to go there with the greatest secrecy, for fear of being discovered by the factors. You would be exposed to dangers a hundred-fold as great, and might speedily find yourself in a dungeon for life or a slave on a West Indian plantation."

His reasoning displeased me exceedingly.

"Sir," I cried, "come good, come ill, I will not renounce the idea of seeing that sweetest and most incomparable lady."

"Should you see her, you would not advance your suit. Never would Mistress

Orme, as she is still called by many, disoblige her father by marrying against his wishes; and for you Giles Orme entertains the bitterest hatred; not only because you are Jacobite, but because by misadventure you have impoverished him, and lost that gold—that fortune—he loved more than life, for greed is the master passion of this English trader. Should you ever find yourself in the Company's territory, be sure of this, that in Giles Orme you would have the most relentless enemy."

At this point I observed that there seemed some stir in the ball-room, and that something was going to take place which excited general interest and comment. I soon discovered the cause. M. Renault de St. Germain was leading forth a lady to dance a *minuet de la cour*. The lady was slender and graceful; she wore a magnificent sacque of white satin brocade, while

her ornaments were the most beautiful pearls.

My heart beat to suffocation. I was moved and surprised beyond measure when on seeing her lovely countenance I discovered this peerless being to be my own dear lady—Mistress Patty Orme. She was smiling gaily at her companion and playing with her fan.

It appeared, from what I heard from the bystanders, that the governor was noted for the grace with which he danced; while "Madam Law," as they styled the lady, was equally celebrated for her beauty and for the extreme elegance of her carriage.

When the dance commenced, the sides of the room were crowded by a throng of eager spectators, and so anxious were all to see the agreeable spectacle that those in the rear rank clambered upon chairs and benches to gain a good view of the fair performers. Loud applause greeted

them; but how can my words describe the grace and dignity with which Mistress Patty moved, or how charmingly majestic she appeared in her splendid dress.

When the minuet was ended, the Governor led her back to her seat, and there around her assembled many gallant men; for although the officers at Chandernagore were Frenchmen I must own they were people of quality, and, like the Governor himself, many of them men of honour and merit.

Although Mistress Orme was surrounded by a court of admirers, still I felt myself impelled to make myself known to her, even though she had written me word that she had pledged her honour never to speak to me again. It is impossible, cried my hot heart, that she will feel herself obliged to keep to so unreasonable a promise, and so cruel a resolve.

I approached her. It was evident that

she knew that I had reached the French settlement; she turned red and then pale, but, recovering her composure, she said, in the French tongue, to a fop dressed in red velvet, who was vainly trying to make himself agreeable to her—

"Ah, Marquis!" cried the lady, "I see an old friend and a fellow-countryman."

"Madam," answered he, "how can you have the barbarity to call yourself an Englishwoman, when such wit, beauty, and grace as yours belong clearly to our nation?"

"Still, Marquis," said she, "this young stranger was my neighbour in Gloucestershire, a country district in England."

"Ah, Madam!" cried he, "do not tell me that such charms as yours were ever hidden away in a country place."

By this time I stood silent before her, unable to utter a word. Pleasure so long

delayed was absolutely painful; we stood side by side too deeply moved to speak.

I observed near her a youthful companion, who in height and elegance resembled Mistress Orme, only that while she had the most delicate pink and white complexion, this young lady, who seemed but a girl, had the raven black hair, the dark eyes, and olive complexion, of a Spaniard.

"This lady," said Cynthia, "is my dear sister, Mistress Carey, and this gentleman is her husband, Captain Carey, the owner of the trading ship the Duke of Grafton, in which you saw me while on the river."

She presented me to a fine-looking man in the uniform of a sailor.

"And this," said she, presenting me in my turn, "is a gentleman from the county of Gloucester, Mr. Ravensthorpe by name."

I took her hand, and conducted her out

into the garden. The French, who in all countries are so gay, and who so completely understand driving dull care away with stately entertainments, had illuminated the grounds with the greatest taste. The paths were decorated by innumerable oil-lights, and these walks led to grottoes and pleasure-houses. Down one of these alleys I led the lady, and we gained a bower in a remote part of the grounds; it overlooked the river, and was removed from the direct observation of the other guests.

How exquisitely beautiful was Cynthia's appearance; her long white dress displayed her graceful figure, her brown locks fell in lovely negligence about her snowy neck, which rivalled in whiteness the strings of pearls which encircled it. I saw from her heaving bosom that she was deeply agitated by meeting me again.

"Madam!" cried I, "you never wrote

again. Day after day, week after week, I waited and watched, hoping you would relent, and now in despair I have come to this country, not so much to seek my fortune, but to find you, who are the only object for which I live."

"I could not write. I dared not. Even now, Nevill, if our meeting had not been purely accidental, I should have felt it my duty to have refused you this interview, but since chance has thrown us together, and you are starting on so distant and dangerous a journey, it would be an unkindness to have parted without a word of farewell; but I can never be yours, though I love you wholly and truly."

"Your words fill me with despair, Madam!" cried I; "but I am grateful for this happy chance, which has given me the exquisite delight of seeing and speaking to you once more."

Then she told me by what strange destiny she happened to land for that night, or rather for a few hours, at Chandernagore. She pointed out to me a large ship anchored in mid-stream of the great river spread before us, and which ran at the end of the garden. She informed me that Captain Carey's ship, the Duke of Grafton, was to unload certain cargoes at Hooghly, the Dutch settlement close at hand, and that her sister, being young, had much wished to attend the French Governor's party, but that when the tide served, her brother-in-law's ship would float down the river to Calcutta in a few days.

"But, madam!" cried I, "may I not follow you to the English settlement? Could you not use your influence with the Mayor and Council to permit me to visit the English factory?"

"I cannot advise it," said the Lady

Cynthia, "banish such an idea as too dangerous."

She then informed me, with that perspicuity and intelligence which formed so marked a feature of her discourse, that Mr. Giles Orme was deeply incensed against me, whilst he acquitted her of all blame; he very unjustly, laid all his misfortunes to my doors.

It appeared that Mr. Orme's imprisonment and the harsh treatment which he had received had arisen from the generally received belief that it was he who had caused the destruction of Upland Tower to remove all proof of having brought over arms in his ships. The destruction of that place had caused him to be much suspected and had brought him into general odium. This injustice might have soured a nobler temper than that of Mr. Giles Orme.

Mistress Patty told me that were it even in her power to appease the anger of her father, still the spirit of the times, and the turn of public affairs in Calcutta, made it most unwise for me to approach that settlement, apart from any private malevolence of her parent or any other individual. She informed me that fifty "interlopers," as the privileged factors styled the free-merchants, had been recently turned out of the place. They had been ordered to depart upon pain of imprisonment, and the threat of being subsequently deported *vi et armis*.

"Moreover," continued the lady, "the relations between the French and English are so strained, that, sooner or later, and indeed before long, war must again break out between the two nations. The late success of the French in Madras—as you know who have come from there—has caused a very bitter feeling between the

rival Companies and rival nations. Besides your having landed in Bengal with so noted an enemy to British interest as Law of Lauriston, the Mayor and Council have heard that you have deserted from Colonel Adlercron's regiment, and are a French spy."

"By Heavens, madam! it is false."

"I never believed it," said Cynthia, "but of course, coming with Law led it to be so supposed; considering all this, and that my father is not to be reconciled to you, and that if the Mayor and Council find you in their settlement imprisonment is your certain fate, I can but recommend to you prudence as the better part of valour. Here, Nevill, we must part, and part—I fear—for ever."

"Madam!" cried I, "is this to be the end of my years of devotion, that you can coldly cast me aside like a worn-out glove? Re-

consider your decision. Recall your cruel words. Dearest Cynthia, give me some hope."

"In future years; in time to come; in heart in all time to come, I am yours, and yet never will I marry to disoblige my father. Never may you be placed in the cruel position I am in, of having injured one I love. My life is a daily regret; 'tis a martyrdom to me to see my father—a feeble old man of seventy—beginning life over again. You, dear Nevill, are young, and your life is before you; but when I see my poor aged parent, with his grey hairs, broken health, and, alas, broken hopes, working daily with so much courage at his business, I am cut to the heart. Unfortunate old man! my conscience tells me that it was my want of candour, my want of rectitude, my want of judgment, and my selfish devotion to one who is no more,

which have been the cause of his ruin. Beside, Nevill, I am now as poor as yourself, for all my mother's fortune I have given up, to enable my father, by fresh trading ventures, to again build up his estate. This must be our last parting, and my final answer."

At these words, I own that I wept like a child, nor was Lady Cynthia more collected than I was.

"I can bear my own trouble, but not your grief, Nevill!" she murmured. "To see you so unmanned breaks my heart. Let us meet our untoward destiny bravely. In the time of war and peril which threatens this settlement some work of usefulness and post of honour may come to you. You will be happy again and begin life afresh, but I, who am not older in years than you are, am far older in heart. I have long ago given up all hope of happiness."

"Then, madam, I am to understand I am dismissed?" cried I.

"Put it not so unkindly; dismissed, you are not, for you will ever be dearer to me than life, but neither are you engaged to me."

We remained for long in earnest conversation, and entranced in each other's society, during which time Cynthia begged me repeatedly not to follow her to Calcutta, and said that she had suffered such agony of mind in hearing of my arrest that she dreaded above all things a repetition of the terrible scenes we had lived through two years before; and she added that if my business with Dalston absolutely obliged me to visit the English settlement I must not seek to see her, it was not her wish, for it might place me in great danger.

On the ball ending I conducted Mistress Patty, escorted by her sister and Captain

Carey, to a flight of steps, leading down to the river. They entered a boat which was to take them back to their ship. I handed Mistress Orme into the boat, and on the side of the river we said our last farewell. I watched the small craft skim across the dark water, and through the broad path of glory caused by the moonlight shining on the river, until they at length reached the ship.

I was dismissed! It seemed a cruel ending for so many years of waiting, that we should be so placed that I was virtually compelled to abandon her, and that she was forced to give me up. However I could not at that minute realise my position; the glamour of her presence was over me; without her I had neither aim nor object in life; but with her dear voice still ringing in my ears I could not face the bitter truth of my desolation.

I stayed for an hour or so watching the black hull of the ship, with a strange mixture of confused, and at length of almost angry, feelings in my heart. She had never loved me as I had loved her, or she would never have abandoned me at the bidding of any parent, said my wounded pride; still I could but do her the justice to say that a marriage was impossible now that our fortunes were both equally low.

The guests from the ball did not leave until dawn, the lights in the house disappeared, and those in the garden had long gone out, but sunrise found me still in the Governor's grounds. I had wandered all night backwards and forwards, the air was deliciously balmy and calm, although a cool fresh wind blew from the river. The sky above was cloudless and filled with the most lustrous stars. When dawn appeared

thousands of birds began twittering in the trees. I returned to the house to change my dress, and proposed visiting Dalston at an early hour, as in India all classes rise with the sun.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN DANGER.

"Mr. Law would speak with your honour at once," said a servant at this moment addressing me. On following him, I found Law of Lauriston standing in the hall in a travelling-coat; a litter and its many carriers stood waiting at the front door, while in attendance was a regiment of porters to carry away his already packed boxes; all showed he was in the very minute of departure. Moreover there was an ex-

pression of exhilaration and triumph in his countenance quite new to me, for of late years he had looked equally jaded in mind and body.

"Nevill," cried he in a gay tone, "I am leaving for Muxadabad. My one regret is that I must bid you farewell."

I was amazed. "Sir!" cried I, "your departure is most sudden."

"I leave on urgent affairs. Should you find the life of a free-merchant unpleasing to you, remember I can obtain a place and, I believe, quick preferment for you, at the court of Muxadabad."

He grasped my hand warmly, and then entered his equipage. The shuffling litter-bearers carried him quickly out of my sight. I was perplexed beyond measure at his exceedingly sudden departure, of which he had not given me the least warning. After he had left, I hastened to Dalston's encamp-

ment, whose tents were pitched under a grove of trees, not far from the Governor's house.

I found Dalston at breakfast, in which meal he asked me to join him.

"Law of Lauriston is gone," I ejaculated. not having recovered from my surprise.

"Gone! gone! already. He has not let the grass grow under his feet this time. If he had acted with this promptness in Madras, Robert Clive would not have won so many battles there."

"Why has he gone?" asked I.

"I am not in the secret, but I doubt not that he has been ordered upon some secret service by M. Duplex. He may have gone to fan the flame of enmity which has sprung up between the Viceroy of Bengal and the factors of Calcutta."

Dalston then explained to me how the Viceroy of Bengal, it was said, had

vowed to drive the English from the country.

"As for me," cried Dalston, "I should not be sorry to see the trading monopoly and power of these arrogant factors lessened; still I am an Englishman also, and I do not wish to see the British interest trampled upon by these Monsieurs, nor by the Moors of Muxadabad either. But once we reach the court of the Mogul, one thousand miles from this, we shall be beyond the influence of these quarrels.

We remained at Chandernagore some months, but one day Dalston announced that we must visit the British settlement.

A few days later Mr. Dalston, myself, and Monsieur St. Fray, a French officer, were floating down the river in a craft to Calcutta. At this time I began habitually to wear the Moorish dress; it was more suitable to a hot climate than our silk and broadcloth

coats. My garb was not one of great splendour; it consisted of a white turban, a pair of loose drawers, a red sash round my waist, in which was stuck, rather theatrically, a large dagger, while a long loose robe of figured cotton completed my Turkish attire. What pleased me the least were the shoes worn without stockings, and of a make and shape differing from ours. Dalston expressed himself much pleased with my appearance, but, for my part, I felt rather ridiculous; though many of the English at that time, who had long resided in Bengal—like Dalston himself—habitually wore Moorish clothes.

Dalston passed in India as an Arabian merchant; some said he was a Turk, but few suspected him of being an Englishman. He was called "Ibrahim Khan." He had long resided in Barbary, where, as I have said before, it had been in his power to

obtain the freedom of the luckless Archibald Law from slavery. Some said that Dalston had accepted the degraded tenets of the Koran; he had so far conformed to them that he had more than one Moorish wife; still there was something whimsical and extraordinary in his character, which inclined him to enjoy figuring in the disguise of a Moor, an infidel race, hateful and contemptible to most of our way of thinking. Outside these whims, Dalston was a man of spirit and of honour.

I was at a loss to understand why M. St. Fray, an artillery officer in the French service, accompanied us; but I soon discovered his secret, for with that want of reserve, dignity, and modesty, peculiar to the French character, he confessed that he was enamoured—or affected to be so—of Mistress Orme. Still, though this intrigue might have helped to attract him to Calcutta,

I had presently grounds to suspect that he was really going there on some secret service.

After all the forebodings of Mistress Cynthia, whom I had vowed never to see again, I felt no anxiety in visiting Calcutta in my present disguise. Dalston had a pass correctly signed, and I was included as one of his retinue. So many travellers arrived at the English factory from all parts that it was impossible for the factors to suspect or detain every company of trading Moors, and Dalston as well as I myself considered that I was in no danger; but in this we were both mistaken, an error which caused me many months of despair.

Wind and tide were in our favour; we dropped quickly down the river, and in nine hours found ourselves before the English settlement. Calcutta from the river looked a place of importance. On

one side of the settlement was a large black town. The Fort was not very imposing, but the public gardens, parks, and trees, had an appearance both verdant and refreshing in that hot clime. The factors had built fine large houses, while many lawns and pleasure-grounds ran down to the river.

We disembarked at some steps leading to the Custom-house, a building that was little more than a thatched open shed. The head officials were two Englishmen, who from their dress and language seemed to have lately been super-cargoes or warrant officers of some ship. They were smoking Dutch clay pipes and drinking arrack punch. Dalston was well known to them. I remained in the background, and after examining our scanty baggage, which they did not closely inspect, I passed this barrier without suspicion.

Once past the Custom-house there was

little fear of our being much noticed in the black town, amidst the bustle of the streets and bazaars of Calcutta. Swarms of natives had been attracted hither by the prospect of transacting business with the British. We saw no white faces, but the many black ones had a general aspect of being intent on their own affairs. The narrow road afforded much shade, though the mingled odours of rancid butter, stagnant ditches, and cocoa-nut oil, were somewhat overpowering. Then the crowded bazaars were rendered confusing by reason of the noises, such as the creaking of rude cart-wheels which had never known grease, the babble of voices, the ever-sounding Indian drums, and jingling of bells, for ever ringing in honour of idols.

The houses of the English stood in a suburb far apart, and their gardens were surrounded by high prison-like walls, while

at their gate-houses, or porters' lodges, were many servants, mostly armed with swords.

Dalston had sent his servants and camp to a place in the country, close to one Omichund's garden in the north part of the town.

As we neared our encampment we passed the high wall which enclosed Omichund's gardens, a place more like an orchard than what we understand by a garden, and which covered an area of ground equal to four acres. From the large gateway of this enclosure, as we approached, ran out a multitude of people, who, by their outcries and lamentations, and their violent gestures, denoted that they were stirred by the contending passions of fear, anger, and despair. Then appeared half a dozen English musketeers under the command of a sergeant. They surrounded and guarded a

litter, in which was seated an aged Gentoo dressed in spotless white.

I put my hand to my sword on seeing the soldiers, Dalston and the Frenchman did the same; but so occupied were all, both guards and the crowd, with the prisoner, that no one seemed to notice us especially. We learnt though, quickly enough, that the prisoner was Omichund himself, and that he was being carried to the fort by order of the Governor, Mr. Drake, but what was the nature of his offence had not yet transpired.

Dalston seemed both indignant and disturbed. "This is a high-handed proceeding," cried he; "Omichund is no British subject, but a merchant of Muxadabad. If the Viceroy were indignant at the arrest of Kassendass, a man of no mark, he will be the more angry when he knows that this indignity has been offered to a

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person of wealth and quality in this country."

Moreover Dalston considered this arrest as vexatious beyond measure, for he counted upon the good offices of this man to further our journey to the North.

We reached our camp, but there all was in uproar. The relations and servants of Omichund who had followed us wailed and cried, and rent their garments, while the prisoner's brother, with much seeming eloquence and many tears, pressed Mr. Dalston to visit Muxadabad, and from the Viceroy himself to obtain Omichund's immediate release, nor would they be pacified until they had extracted some sort of promise from us that we would exert ourselves in this matter.

After the first twenty-four hours I cannot tell with what anxiety I desired to leave the precincts of Calcutta, and how dis-

tasteful and wearisome the place was to me; and the reason of this I knew to be, that I was near Cynthia, and yet completely parted from her.

There was a public road which passed by Giles Orme's residence; although it often occasioned me inconvenience, never would I pass that way, and yet, oh, silly heart! what should I have seen? Nothing but the high walls of her father's gardens, and his servants armed with swords, who kept watch at his gateway. To add to my absurdities, I would, at night, go out in a boat upon the river, and watch the lights streaming from Giles Orme's windows; but as I went little abroad, and knew none of the English, so neither could I see nor hear anything of that dear lady who was never for one minute out of my thoughts.

St. Fray's conduct also occasioned Dalston and myself much annoyance; we who

only wished when our business was arranged to leave the English settlement quickly, seemed by his incautious conduct likely to attain an undesired notoriety.

St. Fray would dress himself sometimes in his full uniform, a handsome one of blue, turned back with yellow, a powdered wig, a three-cornered hat, and a rapier by his side. Thus attired he would then ride forth, and stop his horse in public places, and draw plans of the city. He would look over the state of the defences, which were poor enough, ask the number of the garrison and of the guns, and then openly talk of the number and size of the cannon necessary to take the Fort! This St. Fray did so candidly and carelessly, that none but the British factors, who were wholly absorbed in their own business, would have let him come and go at his trade, which was no less than that of a spy. If his indiscreet conduct had ended

here, our anxiety and indignation might have not been so excessive, but, dressed in the finest suits, such as in blue and silver, brown velvet and yellow satin, or purple velvet turned up with pink, he would besides make morning calls upon the wives and daughters of the factors.

One day, soon after he arrived, while habited in a suit of pale green silk, embroidered with flowers, he caused himself to be carried in a litter to Giles Orme's house. When I saw him start, powdered and rouged, I was angry that this fop could go to a residence where I had once been welcome, and where I could no longer enter: however I did not envy him when he returned, for he arrived covered with mud and in the greatest disarray. He stated that Giles Orme's servants had driven him from the house with sticks and stones, but of what impertinence he had been guilty I knew not.

Then by ogling honest Moorish and Gentoo women upon the roads and paying them compliments he so offended the people that he was dragged before the Kadi—the Moors believing that such conduct should be punished by death itself. But Dalston having a friendship with the Kadi, and, besides, having given him a heavy bribe, St. Fray—in consideration of his ignorance of the Moorish law—was freed; although Dalston clearly foresaw that unless we left the settlement quickly his misdemeanours would bring us before the Mayor Court itself; therefore we did all we could to hasten our departure.

The Company's territory extended for ten miles. On the boundary of the settlement was a village composed mostly of their weavers; this place was called Nabobgunge. Thither I had been sent by Dalston for two purposes; the one to dispatch by water to

Muxadabad several boat-loads of bales of fine muslin he had purchased; the second to buy horses and ponies for our journey northwards, as the place was celebrated for an excellent and hardy breed.

On arriving at this village, the rural beauty of the place charmed me exceedingly. My solitary tent was pitched in a thick shady grove near a temple. The very isolation in which I lived suited my love-sickness, as one of its signs is a desire for solitude. Possibly the hideousness of my circumstances, and the dangers which followed, have left this country village painted on my mind as an earthly paradise.

I used to rise at dawn, awakened by the songs and twitterings of millions of birds. Monkeys were chattering and skipping from branch to branch; green parrots were screaming and flying from tree to tree. I enjoyed the

luxury of swimming in the river, and used to watch with interest the Brahmin guardian of the shrine, near which I lived, daily adorning his stone deity with garlands of flowers, while his daughters, tall elegant girls draped in simple muslin robes, came each morning to draw water from the river in large red earthen vases.

The village was large and wealthy, As I could not speak Moorish with any fluency I had not much intercourse with the people; but from what I saw of the villagers they seemed to me a cheerful, hardworking people, only that with ourselves they were not over particular in the matter of honesty while dealing in horseflesh.

The village consisted of a single street. At one end of it stood a large and shady tree; under this the principal business of the place was conducted. While under this spreading tree, I was inspecting and

rejecting horses — one day (and never shall I forget that ill-starred day) I was engaged in bartering about the price of a pony which I suspected of being broken winded; when I perceived a small party of men with red turbans on their heads, and drawn swords in their hands, were making their way through the crowded market-place. I never for one minute realized that I was the object of their search, but, however, on finding myself suddenly attacked, I stood upon the defensive with only two of the enemy threatening me, but four more hurried up.

However, I remained with my sword *en garde* and showed fight, but as I crossed weapons with the foremost of my two opponents my arm was grasped from behind and my sword was wrested from me, and I was a prisoner held by four stalwart

natives. I was defenceless, and soon discovered I was in the power of the tyrannical factors of the Company.

"Zounds! Don't kill him, disarm him," shouted the thick loud voice of a red-faced and drunken sailor who now came up. "Blow me! after serving His Majesty — God bless him—these many years, as a warrant-officer in His Majesty's Fleet, I am not the man to let a cursed Jacobite loose to bring back the French king, the Pope, and the Pretender. Yes, young man, you must sheer off with me. I know what that cursed hole in the Fort is like too; I once spent a night there myself;—and there, my good sir, you had better come along without a word. You will be safe enough under the escort of Jack Tanner."

I determined to be as civil as possible to my enemy, in the hopes of disarming

suspicion and finding some opportunity of escape before reaching Calcutta.

I found myself compelled by my captors to walk away from the brief elysium I had found in this village. I was conducted to the riverside and made to enter a boat, which I discovered to be an English Custom-house vessel cruising about to see that no contraband goods were being taken into French territory. This craft was indeed rather a small vessel than a boat; she had two masts and was rigged like a brig, except that the foremast was much loftier of the two. A deck cabin occupied about three-fifths of her length, upon which, under an awning, sat two Englishmen, with glasses, pipes, and a bottle of rum for an evening draught, upon the table. The English flag proudly floated over the brig's stern. A crowd of natives were upon the deck on the forward part of the ship

and while others were engaged in steering the vessel.

On reaching the ship any vague hopes of escape I had formed were quickly dissipated, as I was immediately handcuffed and left in charge of the soldiers of the Custom-house police who had captured me; while the Custom-house officers at the table made merry over the rum, and began bawling and shouting such songs as Bobbing Joan, and Saint George he was for England.

I sat on the deck in silence: above was a cloudless sky bright with stars. The light craft with its high fancifully-carved prow shot through the dark but gleaming river. The forms of the palms upon the shore stood blackly forth from the darkness, and lights gleamed among the foliage, showing that we were passing houses and villages; while, mixing with the boisterous songs of my captors, were the wild laughter and

hideous outcries of the jackals on the banks. I tried to picture my probable fate, but I was very hopeful. I never for a minute anticipated the brutality with which I was to be treated. Life is a series of surprises, and it is the evils and blessings which we the least fear or expect which generally befall us.

On landing at Calcutta I was conducted through the native town, on foot, and in fetters, to the Fort, which abutted on the river; and I finally found myself immured in a hot and small dungeon which looked through grated windows into the court-yard of the Fort.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN PRISON.

It is difficult to analyse my feelings when I found myself thus immured. I was in a small dark dungeon, although above ground. From the grated window I could discern a dim courtyard with buildings, and an arcade around it, in which was an armed soldier on guard. Within the cell the earthern floor seemed in movement by reason of the numerous black ants and other insects which covered it, while buzzing gnats, or as, they

are there called, mosquitoes, by their continual stings rendered sleep impossible. The atmosphere, for it was in the month of March, was, even then, exceedingly hot, and but little air came into the prison. I was glad to keep my face against the bars of the small window, and watch the bats in the courtyard flitting hither and thither. The stars glittering brightly in the sky, seen through the grated unglazed aperture, alone seemed to speak of hope, and relieved me of despair. Shining clear above me was the North Star and King Charles's Wain I had so often watched, in happier days, in other lands.

I had many reflections to occupy me. What had happened to Cynthia, I wondered; did she know of, and lament, my arrest? What had happened to Dalston, and where was St. Fray? It was possible, and to be hoped, they had fled and were in safety at

Muxadabad, or even Chandernagore; for once out of the Company's territory they were in no danger.

I threw myself at length upon the mean bed, and slept through utter weariness. At the first streak of dawn a gun was fired, which awoke me from my uneasy slumbers. Presently I heard my prison door unlocked, and a Gentoo entered. He brought my breakfast; it was not luxurious, consisting only of one large red earthenware jar of water, and one loaf of bread. Still I seized the water with the greatest joy, as from the heat my thirst was excessive, and I eat the bread, for I was exceedingly hungry. After this meal, I made the best ablutions which I could effect from the remaining water, and I felt cooled and refreshed.

Some little time after, the vivid rays of the sun had begun to gild the brick buildings opposite to my dungeon, and I judged

it was about eight o'clock; again my prison door was unlocked, this time by an English sergeant with a guard composed of Portuguese soldiers. He summoned me to accompany him, telling me I was to appear before the mayor in the Court of Justice.

"What is the charge against me, sergeant?" I inquired.

"I have no account of that," he replied, "my orders are only to bring ye before the Mayor; there is a Common Prosecutor who attends to the charges. Have ye been trying to buy and sell in the worshipful Company's marts? If so, as I'm a Briton, they will send ye on ship board."

Closely guarded I reached the court-house, which proved to be quite near at hand. I was placed in front of a portly gentleman in a crimson and gold-laced coat, a bag-wig, and a very crimson countenance, whom I presumed to be the worshipful

Mayor of Calcutta. Two attendants in green and gold embroidered turbans, and coats reaching down to their ancles, stood behind his chair, holding great silver maces in their hands.

A clerk of arraigns, in a grey suit, sat below the Mayor, and he rose as I was placed by the sergeant at the bar of the Court, and said in a loud tone—

"Nevill Ravensthorpe, you are indicted before the worshipful the Mayor of Calcutta upon the following charge, to wit, that you being a lawful subject of His Majesty King George II., have been guilty of high crimes and misdemeanours in maintaining a traitorous correspondence with his enemies, for the which treasonable practices you, were duly taken into custody at the house of Ravensthorpe, in the county of Gloucester.—And whereas you effected your escape from the soldiers who were sent to

arrest you, and have been found at large in the Honourable East India Company's chartered factory of Calcutta. You are now apprehended as an enemy of your Sovereign, to be sent back to England, there to be delivered into proper custody."

As this indictment came to a conclusion, I saw the sinister gaze of Giles Orme fixed upon me, from amongst several Englishmen who were standing or seated at the side of the Mayor. I then of course recognised the quarter from which this information came.

"How say you, Nevill Ravensthorpe?" inquired the mayor pompously; "can you deny that you are the person implicated in these charges."

I bowed and said I did not deny them, as I saw that in the presence of Orme any such denial was useless.

"The second charge against you is, to wit,

that you, being a sergeant, have deserted from Col. Adlercron's Regiment, and that you have taken service with the Nabob of Bengal without the worshipful Company's permission, and that you are in treasonable correspondence with the King's enemies, to wit, one Law of Lauriston, in the service of the King of France."

This I vehemently denied; I stated that I had purchased my discharge, though I had no papers with me to support my statement.

They then did not scruple to try and cajole me, asking me on what mission Law had gone to Muxadabad, and what I knew of the Nabob's secret intentions, and said that if I would make a clean breast of it I should obtain a free pardon; but when I truly declared I was not in the secrets of these men, they called me "an obstinate dog," "a spy of France," "a traitor," and much else, and ordered me to be taken back

to my cell, and there to be retained until I could be embarked on shipboard, to be conveyed to England.

I bowed to the Mayor and assumed an air of haughty indifference, and I thought I saw in Giles Orme's keen eyes a gleam of triumph. I quietly followed the sergeant and guard to the Fort, and again found myself locked into the prison where I had been lodged the night before.

This cell has since been much spoken of in England, for it was the scene of the terrible tragedy known as the Black Hole. It was, in fact, the common prison of the Fort, intended especially for the refractory soldiers of the small garrison, but also, as in my case, employed for other prisoners whom the powerful Company might incarcerate.

I had returned with haughty steps to the prison, but when the bolt had heavily clamped in its socket and I was alone my

reflections were indignant enough. They had called me in open court, "a French spy," "a deserter," "an arrant rogue," "a liar," "a vagabond," "a sorry knave"; and my blood boiled with indignation to hear these epithets applied to myself. I was no spy, and no deserter. Their severity to me did not arise, I knew, wholly from my being a Jacobite as many of the factors were of ruined royalist families themselves; but because I had been seen in the company of Law, Dalston, and St. Fray, to whom such hard words might be more justly applied, as they were one and all enemies to the Company.

I longed to know what Cynthia felt and thought—that lady who was so near and yet so far off. I hoped and believed that she would seek me now that I was thus unfortunate. Then I thought Dalston would try and help me; and if, after all, they sent me

back to England—for death I had no fear; to die a year hence, even on a scaffold, seemed so remote a contingency that it needed no immediate thought, and the hope of leaving this cell in a ship seemed something of a cheering prospect.

Some days passed. The solitude, the bad air, insufficient food, and the want of exercise, were doing their work. I became very despondent, the more so, as day by day went by, and still neither Lady Cynthia nor any of my other friends made any sign. Their forgetfulness cut me to the heart, and I longed to leave Bengal, come what would. I inquired of the sergeant, who was my gaoler,

"When shall I be put on board ship?"

"The fleet has sailed, and, though right glad should I be to see the back of your stockings, of course you must remain for ten months at least—if not a year."

Ten months or a year in that dismal cell! The sergeant, the only person I could converse with, was a churlish, bad-hearted lout, and took particular pleasure in spiting me, thinking I had deserted to the French.

The fleet sailed every December, and I knew that what he said was true, although I had hardly thought of it before.

My accursed fate seemed to plunge me deeper and deeper into misfortune. To linger in this miserable prison, or some similar place, in this deadly climate for nearly a year! It seemed to me too unendurable.

Occasionally, at night, my lodging was shared by a drunken soldier, or some man incarcerated for some small military offence; and so weary was I of my own sad reflections that I hailed the society of these criminals with a joy which changed into envy when my late companion in misfor-

tune was marched away in the morning, and I still remained stagnating in the dense dank heat, a prey to despairing thoughts.

No word came from Law, Dalston, or the Lady Cynthia. I seemed abandoned by the whole world, and the knowledge that I was friendless, forsaken, and forgotten, added to my melancholy.

One morning in the beginning of April, I felt too ill to rise from my miserable couch. My head ached violently, and soon, though the heat was intense, I shivered with the cold; and then my skin became violently hot, and my mind seemed to wander. I arose and rushed at the barred window; I tore at the iron bars, but they did not give way; I kicked and thumped at the door, but I only realised my own helplessness, as I heard a mocking sound of laughter outside. Exhausted, I threw myself again upon the bed. Air was all I wanted, but as I shouted

for air I heard again the mocking laughter outside my dungeon.

Mosquitoes, with their petty tyrannical annoyances, prevented my thoughts keeping a definite direction; while again cold and hot fits returned, and, in fact, I was presently in a burning fever. Only one thought could prominently stand forward in my mind—a prayer for one last look on Cynthia's face, and then death.

I cannot recall the ensuing period; I believe I became delirious. I alternately conceived myself charging at the head of an army for reinstating the King over the Water upon his throne. Then I was a mere private soldier in his army, shouldering a musket, unknown and unnoticed, though burning with loyal emotions. Then Cynthia only was before me, and I was chasing her amid ricefields and thickets of plantains; but as I seemed to catch her she proved to

be one of Dalston's gazelle-eyed houris, black and gem-bedizened, with a pearl nose-ring, and jingling anklets. Then I could neither think nor dream, and I became unconscious.

The factors, I heard afterwards, not lost to all humanity, sent a barber, who bled me. They also sent me such food, medicine, and attendance, as my desperate state required. For days I lay between life and death; but at length my youth, and my Gloucestershire constitution, came to my rescue; I was very weak, but still restored to consciousness, and able once more to realize my miserable position.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOPE.

WEAK, miserable, imprisoned, as I was, it was still a joy to be again able to think. The air was stagnant, and I felt as in an oven, while mosquitoes hovered still about me, with their constant petty annoyances. I wandered from my bed to the barred window, and longed passionately for freedom, or even to be put upon shipboard.

Where was Cynthia? Where was Dalston? Had I been abandoned by all the

world? and I began to recall bitterly all the reflections I had heard that friendships are generally found useless in the time of misfortune.

Such property as was found in my tent at Nabobgunge, and my tent itself, had been seized by my gaolers. My food in prison was but one loaf of bread a day, but I was permitted to beg from the passers-by, who, of their charity, sometimes relieved my necessities; still the belief that I was a deserter, and a French spy, steeled the hearts of the factors against me.

One day as I rattled my money-box at the window, dressed in a ragged shirt and trousers, I noticed two ladies and the chaplain of the Fort approaching. My heart beat wildly; the elegance of one of these ladies, and the perfection of her dress and figure, left me not a minute in doubt. It was Cynthia and her sister, Mrs. Carey;

accompanying them was the chaplain's son, Lieutenant Bellamy by name, a handsome young officer dressed in a red uniform with blue facings, and a gold-laced hat.

"Madam," I heard the quavering voice of the white-haired old divine say, addressing one of the fair sisters, "the want and misery in our jails, both in England and here, is a matter of marvel to me, for, however guilty, the poor wretches in prison should not be allowed to rot from dirt, starvation, and disease, and, therefore, madam, I consider it a most laudable act of Christian charity for you to wish to visit, and to succour, the poor prisoners in this Fort."

They were now nearly facing my prison window, but, to my intense disappointment, turned and visited the opposite cell of a Gentoo prisoner.

On their leaving it, I heard young Bellamy say, "That rogue, one Hogben, has taken

service with France; such scurvy, rascally, conduct deserves hanging."

"Nay, sir," said the voice I knew so well, "'tis false; letters have come from Madras, giving him an excellent character from Adlercron's regiment. He is for the King over the Water," she whispered, "but that, Mr. Bellamy, should be no crime in your sight. I would speak with him alone."

In one second Cynthia was at the barred window of my cell.

"I dared not come before," she said in a low tone, "but Mr. Dalston, who is at large, has bribed the guard to effect your escape; should he fail (the times are very disturbed) I have interested Mr. Drake, the governor, and Captain Minchin, the commandant, in you, and hope that you may, through them, obtain your freedom."

Cynthia and her party moved away.

"In common humanity, Mr. Chaplain,

that soldier should be moved to a more salubrious prison," I heard her say; but the voice I loved so well died away in the distance.

From that day the chaplain sent me daily wine and excellent food from his own table. Moreover, he several times visited me, and gave me much ghostly and spiritual comfort, but his Christianity was so flavoured with Whiggism that I preferred his gifts to his theology.

Nevertheless, after that angel visit of my dear lady I was a new man; hope lived again; I even felt patient and resigned. Day after day passed slowly, and yet no Dalston appeared. I feared his scheme had miscarried. The chaplain informed me that Cynthia and her family would shortly leave the settlement; but though a rumour of the Nabob attacking the Fort was circulated by ignorant people, it was absurd; the

English had held that settlement a hundred years, and had never been attacked before.

I waited, however, with confidence, for some change for the better in my fortunes. I even reflected with cheerfulness that I might have been incarcerated in a worse dungeon, as I could, from my small prison window, at least look out on the world. The court in which my prison was situated was the thoroughfare to the great warehouse and also to the court-house. I derived no small distraction from watching the people coming and going. As early as seven o'clock in the morning the senior and junior factors used to pass through, near my window, and some would occasionally throw pence into the box I rattled to attract their attention.

I used even to see the small, thin, aged figure of Giles Orme pass, dressed in a bob-wig and snuff-coloured suit; but then I hid

myself; my pride revolted from begging from a man whom I knew to be my bitter enemy.

I soon knew by sight and by name all the principal factors, such as Messrs. Manningham, Holwell, and the governor, Mr. Drake, and I could but envy that handsome youth, young Bellamy—who often passed in his gay uniform—especially when I reflected that he was free to see and to visit my adored lady, while I was dying by inches in jail from starvation, the evil climate, and sore illness.

Facing my prison was another cell, exactly resembling mine, and also protected by a verandah. In this prison the Gentoo, Omichund, was lodged, the merchant whom I had seen conveyed to prison on that ill-starred day on which I had reached the settlement of Calcutta. It appeared that when he was first confined he refused to eat food or drink water, it being against the

tenets of his religion to eat or drink anything except what had been prepared by people of his own caste or by himself. So far did he carry this prejudice that he nearly died. Governor Drake thereupon gave permission for him to cook for himself in the court of the prison. At early dawn, therefore, Omichund was let into the prison square guarded by a sentry; he made a small fire on the ground, and upon this cooked some simple food; he also drew water from a well. Through the leniency of the guard, he was allowed often to come to my window and talk with me. His friends also came to see him and brought him food and other things. His imprisonment, unlike mine, was made as light as possible; this was, I discovered, because he was a man of wealth and much note among his own people.

I found an occasional alleviation of my

wretchedness in conversing with Omichund, who spoke our language fluently. I found he held doctrines such as were expounded by Plato, and that he entertained what seemed to me very sublime ideas as to the unity and universality of Deity; while he believed in the continued existence of the individual soul, living in a succession of bodies. He held that so long as the soul had any desire of personal existence, so long as it had any sins of the body to expiate, or desires to satisfy, so long would it be re-born in a body adapted to its aspirations. It might rise to be an angel in a superior world; it might sink to be an animal in this world, or a demon in a lower sphere; but so long as it entertained desires of a personal character it would be re-born in a body liable to the decay or change necessarily appertaining to matter. If, however, it recognised truly in itself the Great Soul of All, and desired

only union with the One, contemning all thoughts of self, the supreme tranquillity and happiness might be attained. He did not hope to accomplish this in his present life, but he trusted to become a Brahmin in his next transmigration; and so enjoy the opportunity of a closer knowledge of Divine things.

I recalled to mind my readings in Plato's Phædo at Oxford, and I conceived a great respect for the Gentoo's religion. He told me that they had a vast number of old sacred books, many of which might only be read by the Brahmins. He suggested that I might be comforted in the next transmigration for woes endured in the present.

Yet, after all, the hopes of meeting Cynthia in a next transmigration, and recognising her, seemed too vague; I wanted her now. But I was somewhat inclined to agree with the Brahmin in respect to the miseries of life being the result not only of

acts in our present existences but also in former lives. I could not believe that loyalty and love deserved my present humiliation and misery; and I found satisfaction in the idea that my present disgrace had been merited by some sinful act in a former existence. He informed me that it was believed that a pure Brahmin could remember his former life; and I endeavoured to find consolation in striving to conceive my own previous existence. But I could think of nothing else than that I might have been one of the Cavaliers who fell, fighting for King and Church, at Marston Moor or Worcester; and that my present miserable life was the result of too happy a death then.

But the tenets of his creed were not the only subjects on which the Gentoo conversed. He maintained that the Viceroy of Bengal would immediately march upon

Calcutta and attack it, assisted by the French, under Law of Lauriston.

He told me that the Viceroy's father, Alverdi Khan, in his last words, had adjured him to expel the Europeans from India, because, as occupants of the soil, they were most dangerous and threatening in their continual aggrandizement; at all events, Alverdi Khan had recommended that the English should not be permitted to have any fortified places.

Should Calcutta be attacked, what then? I most feared that some evil might befall Cynthia, and for her sake I feared for Giles Orme.

Omichund informed me also, that the East India Company maintained a force of about five hundred soldiers, but that only some one hundred and seventy of them were Englishmen; the rest were Portuguese or half-castes. There were sufficient to enforce

the orders of the Company in respect to the exclusion of interlopers, though but a small body to offer resistance to the Nabob, should his threatened advance take place.

Omichund said also that Duplex and Law, both animated by the most undying hatred of the British and British trade, hoped to incite the Viceroy (who was but a silly boy) to attack Calcutta; and that Law had privately visited Muxadabad for this purpose.

I did not myself believe such an attack likely. I thought that things would go on as they had done for the last hundred years, especially as the factors were prepared to release one called Kassendass.

My thoughts had been so earnestly bent upon this hope of escape which Cynthia had held out to me, that from my prison window I had failed to remark that an unusual stir pervaded the settlement. Sunk in the

apathy of despair, I ceased to notice that commotion distinctly existed in the European colony; still in my prison court Moors and Gentoos were everywhere talking together in excited groups. The factors no more came regularly in the morning to their counting-house and store-house, but Englishmen seemed at all hours to dash pass in a state of perturbation.

I was so weakened by my long sickness, and by disappointment in Dalston having failed me, that I lay upon the clay floor of my prison almost inclined to wish myself dead.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WAR.—THE DEFENCE OF CALCUTTA 1756.

I WATCHED many days at my prison-bars in the hope of seeing Dalston, and still more of seeing Cynthia, but they neither came.

I was aroused one day in the early morning by my locks and bars being undone, when two gentlemen, the one in a brown coat and the other in a scarlet, entered my cell. They proved (as I afterwards discovered) to be Mr. Drake, the governor of the fort, and Captain Minchin, the commandant of the Company's troops.

I rose to receive them, and from old military habit, on receiving an officer, I stood upright to attention, and saluted.

"He looks a well-built soldierly fellow," said Captain Minchin; "can you handle a musquet, my man?"

A thrill of hope ran through me as I replied, "I had the honour of serving for over two years in Colonel Adlercron's regiment, and was sergeant of my company when I obtained my discharge."

"The very thing we want; we have consulted with the Mayor about your case; it seems that you are to be deported back to England, firstly, as being suspected in being concerned in illicit trading, against the honourable Company's laws; secondly, that his worship the Mayor received information that you were an escaped criminal, accused of high treason."

"At all events," continued the Governor,

"we are now prepared to condone any old offences against the King if you will now fight for him, and enlist in the service of the honourable Company here."

"I shall be proud and happy so to do," I replied, thanking Heaven in my heart for this unexpected and most joyful deliverance.

"Then, Captain Minchin," said Mr. Drake, "you had better take possession of the man, let him be attested in due form, and exchange that Moorish dress for the British uniform."

"I will do so, Mr. Governor," replied Captain Minchin; "follow me, my man." And with exultation in my heart I saluted the Governor, as he hastily departed in one direction, and I followed Captain Minchin in another.

I saw at once that something unusual had happened. The courtyard and surrounding

piazzas of the Fort were full of bustle. European and half-caste soldiers and Gentoo servants were cleaning arms, carrying stores, or hurrying from place to place. The captain took me to the office of the troops, entered my name, and ordered me to be supplied with a uniform which had belonged to some soldier who had fallen a victim to the effects of arrack or of the climate.

I enjoyed the delicious luxury of a bath by causing a native water-carrier to sluice me from his pigskin of water in a corner of the barracks. I dressed and breakfasted with my new comrades, and I was then put in possession of the facts of the case.

Suraja Dowla, the young Nabob of Bengal, had marched from Muxadabad with a large army. The English factory of Cossimbazaar had surrendered to him. It was reported that he was now marching

on the forts of Chandernagore and Chinsurah.

If he was not checked by the French and Dutch, there were only some one hundred and seventy English soldiers in Calcutta, including the militia, composed of the Company's factors and junior writers, to oppose him. There were, however, some three hundred and forty Portuguese and other Christians in the regular garrison and militia.

I had heard this alarming intelligence from my new companions in arms, although I may say our martial spirit was so great that whatever the odds we looked upon defeat as impossible.

But that day my thoughts received another and far more pleasing turn, for I perceived Mistress Orme riding a grey barb and accompanied by several officers and gentlemen. She wore the same French habit, adorned with silver, the same small beaver hat, her

hair was curled and powdered as in Gloucestershire. Her steed also, as of old, was adorned with red ribbons. On observing me, she separated herself from her escort, and approached me. I stood by the side of her horse, after I had bowed and kissed the small hand, which she had held out to me.

"Nevill, I am leaving, but I could not go without wishing you a farewell, which may I fear prove a final one."

"Nay, madam!" cried I, "say no such melancholy words; fear not, but that we shall beat off these Moors, who are so bold as to threaten us."

"There are many who think that this fort cannot be defended; be that as it may," she said, "I for one am abandoning this settlement, but, ah, Nevill! I leave my whole heart behind, for I am deserting you, my father, and my dear sister Mrs. Carey."

"Madam, I can but rejoice for your own

sweet sake, that you are going; where do you take refuge?"

"I cannot tell you; we have not decided. We may go to the English ships at the mouth of this river, or accept M. Renault de St. Germain's protection at Chandernagore. How gladly would I stay to share your dangers, if my duty did not call me elsewhere. Should you be able to help my father or sister, remember that thus you can best serve me."

"All that is dear to you is dear to me. Madam, should it be in my power as a simple private to help any one you may command me."

"Ah, Nevill! I would not leave, believe me, except that Mr. Orme thinks I shall be useful to his wife and children. My step-mother has lived in seclusion all her life, and is quite unfitted to act for herself in such times as these."

Mistress Orme looked very unhappy and deeply anxious as she bade me farewell. With my eyes blinded with tears, I again kissed her hand. In the uncertain future of the settlement I could but be glad that she was leaving, but still it was terrible to part. I watched her ride away and rejoin her companions, knowing that in this time of danger it was doubtful when we should meet again.

One of the junior factors, then in the militia, Buchanan by name, told me that Giles Orme was against defending the settlement. He said that though Orme had little patriotic spirit he himself would not leave, as he could not abandon all his property. But I had little time for melancholy reflections, as quickly after the drums beat the call to parade, and I took my place in the ranks. The small body of European troops which had been originally raised

by the Company in 1749 for the defence of the Fort were trained as artillery-men. The scanty auxiliaries in the militia had received scarcely any training whatever, but there were evidently fine young fellows amongst them of the same spirit which had inspired the indomitable Clive when he exchanged the pen for the sword.

After the inspection, Captain Minchin, finding that I was perfectly competent to act as drill-sergeant, gave me the rank of corporal and set me to drilling the militia men in marching and counter-marching, the manual and platoon exercises, and in firing by platoons; and, as they were exceedingly willing, they made good progress. But the Portuguese and half-castes displayed less ardour. We obtained some shelter from the blazing sun under the piazzas for such of our practices as could

be performed there. Meanwhile gun-drill was being carried on.

It was now the early part of June, the hottest period of the year, when all nature seemed anxiously looking for the relief of the regular rains. Intelligence arrived that the Nabob with an army of many thousands had invested the Forts of Chandernagore and Chinsurah; but that the French and Dutch had purchased immunity from attack by many lacs of rupees, and that he was on the march to Calcutta.

On hearing this it was determined to defend the fortifications which stretched around Calcutta. The precaution, however, was neglected of blowing up the houses and buildings which overlooked the Fort in case we should be driven back to it. On the 16th of June, 1756, the enemy commenced the attack from the north side of the town, but some guns at

a battery called Perrin's Point, well served by some of the Company's veterans, kept them at bay.

They then advanced in large numbers from the east, and commenced a brisk fire with cannon, musketry, and matchlocks, upon our outposts, which were by no means in good repair.

I had been rapidly advanced to the rank of sergeant, and with a platoon of the militia we lined the breast-works of the town-wall of Calcutta, and I found myself, at last, in all the terrible realities of war. Amidst the groves and gardens and huts of the suburbs the enemy advanced, and the blaze of firearms was incessant. However, although with parched tongues, cracked lips, and suffering greatly from the intense heat, we maintained a return fire. And admirable was the spirit displayed by the young traders and clerks; with fierce, hard-set faces, they

loaded and fired; while an exclamation or two showed that they were eager to get to the bayonet's point. Behind us we could see that all the native town was in commotion, though the inhabitants speedily learnt to keep close to their houses.

Sheltered as we were by the parapet, the English losses were but few considering the tremendous fire which was brought to bear upon us. But one or two fine young traders fell with ghastly wounds, and some of the Portuguese; indeed the whole scene became hell. Dense clouds of smoke hung over the trees and houses, flashes of flame continually darted on all sides. The booming of heavy guns, banging, tearing, shrieking, pattering of small arms and bullets, and the shrieks and groans of the wounded, all combined to create an uproar worthy of a Pandemonium. Then the heat and dust became stifling, while powder and dirt be-

grimed faces and hands, which we had no leisure to clean. Notwithstanding the energy with which we stuck to our guns we could see the swarthy countenances and red or white turbans of our assailants ever drawing nearer and nearer, and seeming more dense in numbers.

At length, after several hours of continued firing, it became painfully evident that the settlement of Calcutta, itself, could not be defended. One out-post after another had to be abandoned; the artillerymen spiking the guns as they retired. My party was ordered to fall back with the rest. The last battery which was deserted was one held by Mr. Holwell, who afterwards had command. It was situated at about three hundred yards from the Fort, opposite the Mayor's Court, which I knew so well.

As we retreated, I thanked Heaven that, whatever was going to happen, I had

secured the brief, exquisite, interview with Cynthia.

So far, if I had obtained no good fortune in love, I had, at least, found it in war, for I was untouched. Of course, though a sergeant, I did not carry a halbert, but a musket and bayonet, like the other soldiers. And I had seen that my firing had done some execution, so often had I fired that the barrel of my gun was almost too hot to hold.

The retreat of the English into the Fort had become general. Some three or four thousand British and Portuguese men, women, and children, were huddled into a confined space, and, for a time, troops and fugitives became mingled in a disorganised mass. There seemed to be no one in command; I listened in vain for any orders, and I could see no one in authority.

After two days' fighting, on the 18th June, the settlement of Calcutta itself was in the hands of the enemy. It was determined to make our last stand in the fort itself, which stood on the river bank. I had kept together the small party of militia I commanded. I shall never forget the shock of indignation we all felt when a fresh piece of evil news reached us. We heard that Mr. Drake the Governor, Captain Minchin the Commandant, Mr. Macket, Captain Grant, and others of importance, had had the baseness to desert their commands, and go off in boats to the ships below Calcutta. I heard Mr. Drake called a d——d Quaker, but that seemed no excuse for his base abandonment of us. I made inquiries as to whether Giles Orme had gone, but I found he was still in the Fort, but of Mistress Orme I could hear no tidings;

I hoped she had left, but some said she was still in the Fort.

Signals were made to the ships to send us boats, but with extraordinary cowardice and selfishness they abandoned us to our fate, for undoubtedly there was time for all to escape if only boats had been sent from the ships.

Captain Young of the Dodolay is related to have especially dissuaded his companions from the attempt to rescue us, while the ship Prince George, which had been up the river, and had intended to drop down to our rescue, unfortunately ran ashore.

Mr. Holwell, who was not professionally a soldier, but who had exhibited fine military qualities, was asked to take the command, and the defence of the Fort was organised as rapidly as possible. So badly was it prepared, that fifty new cannons were actually lying dismounted beneath

the fortifications, which would have been most valuable to us.

I was now appointed to command a party in a bastion opposite the English church. Of this the enemy had taken possession; whence, from the neighbouring houses, they maintained a brisk fire. We endeavoured to expose ourselves as little as possible, and by Mr. Holwell's orders the brick parapets were strengthened and elevated by bales of broadcloth and cotton. Behind these we carried on the unequal conflict. It was desperate work; my clothes and hat had become torn by bullets, but still I escaped. Meanwhile the horrors of fire had been added to the intense heat and the dreadful sounds of the furious strife. From the church and from the neighbouring streets the brisk fire of the enemy had set in flames the storehouse in the Fort. Therefore the dense clouds of its conflagrations were

added to the already suffocating smoke of battle. Altogether the scene was appalling, but still the small British force, deserted by its commanders, kept up the battle. Mr. Holwell's gallant bearing and ardent activity had great influence in sustaining our spirits. I felt that, although I had seen the last of my love, the fierce rage of bloodshed had taken possession of my soul, and I could welcome the death of a soldier.

The defence of Calcutta had been impossible from the beginning, but we fought bravely for five days.

By the afternoon of the 20th June, many of the remaining garrison were killed, all were exhausted, and some were drunk with arrack.

The Fort surrendered to the Nabob of Muxadabad, but even after the flag of truce was raised shots were fired. Some of the garrison attempted to escape by the western

gate, which opened towards the river, but were driven back. The Moors now swarmed in, but they did not betake themselves to slaughter, but to plunder; demanding such matters as watches, buckles, besides all the money they could find.

Mr. Holwell gave up his sword to one of the Nabob's officers. Suraja Dowla, himself, by the northern gate, then entered the Fort in his litter. After informing Mr. Holwell that treasure, not bloodshed, was what he wanted, and promising him, "on the word of a soldier," that he and all the English prisoners should be well treated, the Nabob returned to his camp.

CHAPTER XXV.

WOE TO THE VANQUISHED.

THE Fort had surrendered, and we were now at the mercy of the Moors. As long as the danger and excitement had lasted, which was for about a week, I had bodily strength sufficient to do my duty; but afterwards the reaction of over-fatigue set in. My distemper returned, I had a fever fit, then the ague shook my bones, and I lay under the parapet of the citadel as one dead. I could not move, but I could unfortunately at first

still think. What had become of Giles Orme, of Mrs. Carey, and of Cynthia? There was a report that the last had so long delayed her departure that she also had been present during the siege.

I became unconscious, and when I came to myself it was early morning; while near me I saw several naked corpses, which had been stripped by camp-followers.

I looked around me from my elevated position. I perceived that the store-house was standing, but only as a mass of charred ruins, although the Court House still remained uninjured. But what attracted my notice was a procession of guards, banners, horsemen, richly-dressed Moors, and people being carried in litters, and they all were making their way to the centre of the Fort.

It is possible that I might, at this time, have made my escape, but while viewing my novel surroundings a Gentoo addressed

me, and bade me accompany him. I did so, and soon found myself in the presence of Omichund, my late fellow-prisoner.

"I have been summoned by the Prince," said he, "and must attend his court. Follow me, and no harm shall befall you."

I looked in the dark face of the Gentoo. and I saw, now that the cause of his master, the Nabob of Muxadabad, was successful, that my late fellow-prisoner was, beyond measure, exultant and triumphant.

I made my way through a crowd of assembled people. The Gentoo's body-servants cleared a passage for us, and we reached a spot near my late prison, and never shall I forget the singular spectacle which there met my view.

For the first time I found myself in the presence of an oriental potentate and his court. At any other time I should have been much struck with the gay spectacle, for

the dress of the Moors is handsome; even as it was I could not fail to glance at their jewelled arms, glittering scimitars, silk-embroidered robes, andmany-tinted turbans; also my eye rested upon the Prince himself, the only figure seated. His throne was a magnificent carpet, worked in gold; and his robe was made of a singularly beautiful purple and silver brocade. He was young and boyish-looking, his face not darker in hue than that of an Italian, and I thought the expression of his countenance weak, but I did not consider it cruel, though there was somewhat of an appearance of callousness in it. So much for the gallant scene of the Moorish court; behind it was a deep throng of Gentoos and other spectators, clothed only in white linen.

But in an open space, standing before the Prince, I was equally amazed and grieved to see twenty-two of my own countrymen

and one gentlewoman. They formed a most horrible contrast to the gaily-dressed Moors.

Never, to my dying day, shall I forget the extraordinary and ghastly appearance of those people. They looked as if the grave had been opened and so many corpses had been disinterred. What added to their appalling and deadly appearance was that they were but semi-clothed and their hair dishevelled; while gentlemen and the lower fellows appeared in one common fate of dirt, disorder, and disarray. I recognized, as mere shadows of their former selves, sweet Mistress Carey, Mr. Holwell, (the late gallant defender of the Fort,) Giles Orme, looking more dead than alive, Mr. Walcott, Mr. Burnett, and other factors I had often seen from the prison window. There also was my enemy the Mayor, no longer red-faced, and the sergeant, who had exercised his authority towards me in no gentle way.

Heavens! By what evil alchemy, what magic, what surprising turn of fortune's wheel, had my late persecutors been transformed into such weird, ghostly, miserable figures? I felt like a person suffering from a nightmare.

What could the spectacle mean? My eyes were riveted on the gentle countenance of the solitary lady, Cynthia's sister, Mrs. Carey, a girl of only some sixteen summers. She had the same erect carriage, the same quiet dignity, as my dear lady, but, being country-born, she was darker in complexion, though still an exceedingly beautiful brunette. I could not but be shocked to see her among that frightful crew, and in a place so little suited to her tender years or her sex; and how fervently I hoped that my dear mistress had, in time, found some place of safety! Her fate I knew not, and for her I was a very coward.

The Prince, observing the very weak condition of Mr. Holwell, apparently ordered a seat to be brought for him. The only thing at hand seemed to be a great ledger, which had been in the office of the Fort, and upon that he took his place.

Mr. Holwell seemed to be making a long narration in the Moorish tongue; the Nabob appeared to take little notice of his story, which was possibly somewhat incoherent. I have since heard that Mr. Holwell was complaining that all the English prisoners had been barbarously treated. The Prince presently stopped him short, telling him that he had been informed that there was treasure to a very considerable value secreted in the Fort, and that if he did not disclose it he must expect no mercy. Mr. Howell replied that he knew of no such treasure; and then began to remind him of his assurance the the day before, that on the word of a

soldier no hurt should befall either himself or his friends. To this remonstrance the Nabob paid no more regard than he had bestowed upon the previous complaints. Again he demanded to be informed of the situation of the treasure; and, finding his inquiries vain, he ordered a high officer to march Mr. Holwell away.

A number of matchlock-men conducted him from the Nabob's presence. Amongst them was one tall, finely bedizened, black-bearded Moor, with a great axe over his shoulder; and I feared that the late commander of our garrison was to be forthwith beheaded.

After Mr. Holwell had been led away I saw that Mrs. Carey was brought before the Nabob. I tried to press forward, but was unable to do so, yet in spite of the crowd I was able to perceive that the young potentate looked at her curiously,

while a Moor, magnificently attired in a coat of cloth of gold, appeared also to glance at her carefully. This officer was a man of statelier presence and more astute features than the Nabob, but I observed that there was a craftiness in the expression of his face, which was not otherwise wanting in dignity. My conceptions were justified, for this was the famous Meer Jaffier, who afterwards betrayed Suraja Dowla to Clive and the British at Plassy, and obtained as a recompense the throne of Bengal. Mrs. Carey was in her turn led away strongly guarded. I observed then that Mr. Walcott, a leading merchant, Mr. Burdett, and Giles Orme, were brought forward before the Prince. They were ordered to disclose the spot where the English treasures were concealed. They declared, and with truth, that there was no such spot in the Fort; after which they

were marched by soldiers from the conqueror's presence.

After this the remaining English there present were allowed to go free; among them were such small fry as the prison-sergeant, and others of his class, several ship's-mates and such like.

So far I had been but a looker-on at this scene, which I barely understood, but suddenly I found two powerful guards in the Moorish dress seize me by both arms and push me before the Prince. I stood facing him; he raised his large dark eyes and looked at me curiously. I still wore my uniform of a private. He spoke a few words in his own tongue, which I did not understand. The aged Gentoo Omichund also said a few words, I hoped in my favour, and then the soldiers led me away from the Prince's presence—to death for all I knew. I was evidently still a prisoner,

because men with loaded guns walked before and behind me. They conducted me past the Mayor's Court I knew so well; beyond it I perceived, seated on a rude conveyance, drawn by bullocks, Giles Orme, Mr. Holwell, Mr. Walcott, and Mr. Burdett, and I was told to mount into the cart with them.

I understood soon from the conversation of my companions that we were going to be carried to Muxadabad into perpetual imprisonment; at which they seemed greatly distressed. This was an inland city, the capital of the Prince of Bengal. The factors appeared disappointed at not having received their liberty, and said it was due to the malevolence of Omichund. In this slow and jolting equipage we travelled three miles. At first we were driven through the most populous streets of Calcutta, and the people in the settlement

watched us with pity. I felt sick and weak, but was not so ill as my companions, who looked more like corpses than living men, and their dress was still in the greatest and most unseemly disarray. At the end of our journey, judging from the number of tents and soldiers we perceived, we concluded that we had reached the enemy's camp. We were ordered to alight at a tent so small as almost to be incapable of containing five people.

On dismounting, my fellows in misfortune were manacled in heavy irons, but, though I was the youngest and strongest of the party, they, for some unaccountable reason, allowed me to remain unfettered. I was quite at a loss to think why I should be placed among the Moors' captives. The factors had offended the ruler of that country, moreover they believed themselves to be the victims of Omichund's private resentment;

but, except for my usual untoward destiny, I could not imagine why I should be dragged prisoner to Muxadabad.

My fellow-captives bore their terrible position with great fortitude, though Giles Orme was beyond measure distressed and wept; and when I reflected that that handsome young lady, Mrs. Carey, was his daughter, I understood his great anguish of mind; moreover he seemed uncertain as to Mistress Patty's and his wife's fates.

We all had cause for fear; the Moors of India are a semi-barbarous people, capable of acts of great inhumanity, while Suraja Dowla himself bore the character of being beyond measure cruel and merciless. My companions froze my blood by telling me that the twenty-three people I had seen were all who survived from the tragedy enacted in the dungeon afterwards known as the Black Hole. I learnt with dismay

that Mistress Carey had been given by the Nabob to his General, Meer Jaffier. Captain Carey was dead. They told me also that no one knew where Cynthia was, but that she had left Calcutta before the siege.

After sunset we tried to resign ourselves to sleep, but the crowded state of the tent, the clanking of chains, and the heat would have prevented our reposing, except that we were all so fatigued that at length we slept from sheer exhaustion. After some time I was awakened by hearing what seemed a scratching noise on the canvas of our tent. I also heard a voice saying my name in a whisper, "Nevill," said this voice, "Nevill." At first I thought I was dreaming, but at length I went outside the tent, and found myself in the presence of Law of Lauriston. I was so surprised that I uttered a cry of astonishment. "Silence!" said Law, "let no

one know I am in this camp. We have settled the English this time," he cried in a bitter exulting way; "at last my defeats in Madras are revenged! However I did not come to talk politics with you, but to speak about your own affairs."

We stood under the clear cloudless starlight, the sentries on guard were sleeping on the ground; they raised themselves on their elbows, and watched our interview. Some few words addressed to them in their own tongue by Law made them resume their position of slumber, and leave us undisturbed.

"Nevill!" said the French commander, "Is it possible that I see you wearing the uniform of this peddling Company of Merchants? When I saw you don the weeds of the service of the Elector of Hanover I thought you had reached the lowest pitch of degradation, but for a man of spirit and

honour to serve the East India Company! Good God!"

They talk of men who command their destiny; but I was not in that roll; I seem but the poor shuttlecock of Fate; and I was driven hither and thither without will or purpose of my own. I was weary of existence, and but for one dear being I should gladly be rid of a life too burdensome to endure.

"Tell me, Law, for God's sake! Where is Mistress Orme?" cried I.

"I do not know. Heaven grant she is safe! Nevill!" said Law, "revenge yourself upon your enemies, take service under me, and for France, and help to make an end of these hateful and too successful English traders, and help to drive them from India."

"I cannot!" I replied. "I make no reflections on your conduct, you are a

Scotchman, an exile; you have seen the ruthless barbarities of the Hanoverian soldiery exercised against your fellow-countrymen, and, still more, against your country-women. Every drop of blood in your heart has been turned to gall, but I, although I have been unfortunate, and have no cause to love the present King, still less this Company of Merchants, I cannot go over to the French! There is something in my nature which renders that impossible!"

"Half-hearted, wretched boy!" cried Law bitterly, "you are like the rest of them; you would run with the hare and the hounds. If it were not at the request of Lady Cynthia, would it be worth helping so soulless a youth; who is neither for King James nor King George; neither for the English nor the French; and who is not even for himself?"

"Do you wish to put an affront on me, sir?" cried I furiously; "I never asked your help and assistance! If fortune persecutes me unremittingly, I can bear it. I make no reflections on your conduct, but I am, above all, a Briton; and I will never serve the King of France! Never."

Law of Lauriston laughed.

"'"I perceive you are more ready to suffer for the White Cockade than to serve it."

"The cause of the White Cockade is lost. It were better to join the present Establishment," said I.

"The present happy Establishment, you should say! Look at the smoke rising from Calcutta in flames; in Bengal, at least, the cause of King George has been overthrown. Yes, and thank God it has been ruined and by me! and will never be re-established! Although you all fought valiantly for the Company, you must perceive its cause,

like that of the White Cockade, is also lost."

"I know that the factory and settlement are in ruins."

"And shall never be restored," said Law. "I offer you to accompany me to-night to Chandernagore. I hope to God that there we may find Mistress Orme in safety. You shall be my lieutenant, or I will get you placed at the Nabob's court in a position of wealth and dignity befitting Lady Cynthia's humble servant and your own education."

I was, for a minute, staggered by his offer. I knew it was no vain promise he was making me. The British interest was, for the present, apparently ruined.

"I cannot serve under the French, nor under the Prince—the enemy of the English," I at length said. "I know you mean to be my friend."

"But understand, sir, I am your friend no

more. I hope you may find both favour and fortune with your most noble friends the senior factors of Calcutta."

He departed abruptly. The darkness of night seemed to swallow him up, and he left me to my reflections—which were bitter enough. I was the most solitary of mortals. I had quarreled with the man I most admired and respected in the world; and I had thrown in my lot with a set of London citizens, and money-grubbing traders, who, as a body, I heartily despised. I had elected to go with them into a dangerous and, perhaps, perpetual imprisonment. I had thrown away my last hope of rescue from captivity, while perhaps I had lost my only chance of seeing sweet Mistress Orme again, and my only prospect of being her protector in this time of war and danger.

"Law!" I cried, seeking him in the darkness; but I heard the sound of his horse

galloping away. It was too late to change even if I would have done so. I recovered my momentary weakness, and thought of my honour as a Briton and a gentleman.

After all, I was a Ravensthorpe of Ravensthorpe; my mother was a Mordaunt of Hall; my ancestors had fought at Cressy and Poictiers; one had sailed with Drake, another had raised the country to fight the Armada. I could not serve the French against the English! It was impossible—perish the thought! I would sooner rot in chains in the prison of Muxadabad for the rest of my life.

Still I was distracted with anxiety about Mistress Orme. Was she also, like her sister, in the power of the Moors? If I had escaped with Law, I might have helped them, but as a prisoner I could do nothing for either of these two ladies.

Morning dawned, and the great camp was

soon all astir. Then the guard, in no very courteous manner, awakened the poor merchants in the tent, and we were informed we were at once to begin our weary journey.

Mr. Holwell, pitying Mr. Orme's anxiety, and still having some influence, obtained permission that a letter by messenger should be sent to Mistress Carey at Muxadabad, where she was to have been taken, and also that another man should go to Chandernagore to seek Mr. Orme's family. To obtain these favours, a large money reward was promised and a bribe of five pieces of gold was paid down.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. HOLWELL'S NARRATIVE.

When the moment for departure arrived my companions were again placed upon the bullock-cart, on which we had travelled the night before, while a finely-caparisoned horse was provided for me to ride. The poor factors were treated with great insolence by the guard, although they behaved to me with marked deference.

On reaching the river-bank I found a gilded state-barge had been provided for me; and yet the luckless old merchants

were, we learnt, to perform the journey of thirteen days in an open boat, unprotected from the weather.

After embarking in my splendid vessel, I discovered, from inquiries I made of the servants, that I was being conveyed to Muxadabad by order of the Gentoo Omichund. I then begged to be taken down the river to my own countrymen at Fulta, but this the people answered that they dared not do, as their orders were to carry me inland.

That night our boats were moored near to a village. I was permitted to visit my fellow-prisoners and allowed to take them some luxuries, such as a dish of tea, some snuff, and a bottle of rum.

I attempted to conciliate Mr. Orme by speaking to him with great courtesy, but he answered me so sullenly, and seemed so ill in body and so distracted in mind,

that I entered into conversation with Mr. Holwell. He was a most gallant courteous gentleman, and from him I received the following extraordinary account of his imprisonment and escape from the Black Hole. It was the more interesting to me as that dungeon was the one in which I passed so many weary months.

"After I had given up my sword to the Prince of Bengal," said Mr. Holwell, "he assured me that no harm should come to any of us, but that we must be merely secured for the night, because the lower officers of his army were much incensed against us, and would certainly do us an injury if we were left at large.

"When the Nabob had given his orders and departed, all the prisoners who were the survivors of the garrison, or remainder of the fugitives of Calcutta, were ordered to sit down under the piazza, near your

old prison, and I was among them. Some four hundred or five hundred men, with lighted matches to their guns, were drawn up in front of us. We were then ordered to go into your wretched dungeon, and the Moors, with drawn sabres and pointed guns, forced us in."

"The place was suffocating for one," I exclaimed.

"But," continued Mr. Holwell, "the crowd pressed us onwards to the dreadful place, and we were forced into it by the weapons of our conquerors. In common with others, I had been compelled to give up my musket and bayonet, and I could only retreat with the rest. Picture to yourself," he continued, "the situation of a hundred and forty-six wretches, exhausted by continual fatigue and action, crammed together in a cube of eighteen feet, in a close sultry night in Bengal.

"What must ensue appeared to me in lively and dreadful colours the instant I cast my eyes around and saw the size and situation of the room. Many unsuccessful attempts were made to force the door, for having only our hands to work with, and the door opening inwards, all endeavours were vain and fruitless.

"I endeavoured to bribe an old Jemmantdaar (or Indian under-officer), with two thousand rupees to separate the prisoners into two parties, but, making inquiries, he said that no one dared to wake the Prince, and that it could only be done by his orders.

Profuse perspiration, then raging thirst, were the first accompaniments to this awful imprisonment of a multitude in my old solitary dungeon.

"Various expedients were thought of to give more room and air. They put off

their clothes, they stooped down and rose up together; several weakly wretches being trodden to death or suffocated in the operation.

"Before nine o'clock," continued Mr. Holwell, "every man's thirst grew intolerable, and respiration difficult. Many insults were used to the guard, to provoke them to fire in upon us. Now everybody, excepting those situate in and near the windows, began to grow outrageous, and many delirious. 'Water! water!' became the general cry, and the old Jemmautdaar, before mentioned, taking pity on us, ordered the people to bring some skins of water. This was what I dreaded. I foresaw it would prove the ruin of the small chance left us, and essayed many times to speak to him privately, to forbid its being brought, but the clamour was so loud it became impossible. The water

appeared. Words cannot paint the universal agitation and raving the sight of it threw us into.

"Until the water came I had myself not suffered much from thirst, which instantly grew excessive. We had no means of conveying it into the prison, but by hats forced through the bars, and thus myself, Mr. Coles, and Ensign Scott, notwithstanding the pains they suffered from their wounds, supplied them as fast as possible. Though we brought full hats within the bars, there ensued such violent struggles, and frequent contests to get at it, that, before the water reached the lips of any one, there would be scarcely a small tea-cup full left in them.

"How shall I give a conception of what I felt at the cries and ravings of those, who, in the remoter parts of the prison, could not entertain a probable hope of obtaining a drop, many forcing their passage from the

further end of the room, pressing down those in their way who had less strength, and trampling them to death.

"From about nine to near eleven, I sustained this cruel scene and painful situation, still supplying them with water, though my legs were almost broken with the weight against them. By this time I myself was near pressed to death, and my two companions, with Mr. William Parker, who had forced himself into the window, really were so.

"For a great while they preserved a respect and regard for me, more indeed than I could well expect, our circumstances considered; but now all distinction was lost. My friend Baillie, Messrs. Jinks, Beverley, Buchanan, Simpson, and others for whom I had a real esteem and affection, had for some time been dead at my feet, and were now trampled upon by every corporal or

common soldier, who, by the help of more robust constitutions, had forced their way to the window, and held fast by the bars over me, till at last I became so pressed and wedged up I was deprived of all motion.

"Concluding that I must resign life, I retired from the window into the crowded interior, but was at once seized with intense pains in the breast, palpitation of the heart, and difficulty of breathing. Unable to bear the pains, I made a dash at one of the windows, obtained a place in the third rank from it, then seized a bar and pulled myself into the second rank."

"In a few moments the pain, palpitation, and difficulty of breathing ceased, but my thirst continued intolerable. I called aloud for 'Water! for God's sake.' I had been concluded dead; but as soon as they found me amongst them, they still had the respect and tenderness for me to cry out

'Give him water, give him water,' nor would one of them at the window attempt to touch it until I had drunk. But from the water I had no relief, my thirst was rather increased by it, so I determined to drink no more, but patiently await the event, and kept my mouth moist from time to time by sucking the perspiration out of my shirt-sleeves, and catching the drops that fell like heavy rain from my head and face. You can hardly imagine how disappointed I was if any of them escaped my mouth.

"By half-an-hour past eleven the much greater number of those living were in a raging delirium, and the others quite ungovernable, few retaining any calmness but the ranks next the windows. They all now found that water instead of relieving, rather heightened, their uneasiness, and 'Air! air!' was the general cry. Every insult that could be devised against the guard, all the

opprobrious names and abuse that the Suba, Monickchund, &c., could be loaded with, were repeated to provoke the guard to fire upon us, every man that could rushed tumultuously towards the windows, with eager hopes of meeting the first shot. Then a general prayer rose to heaven to hasten the approach of the flames to the right and left of us, and put a period to our misery. But these failing, they whose strength and spirits were quite exhausted laid themselves down and expired quietly upon their fellows; others, who had yet some strength and vigour left, made a last effort for the windows, and several succeeded by leaping and scrambling over the backs and heads of those in the first ranks, and got hold of the bars, from which there was no removing them. Many to the right and left sank with the violent pressure, and were soon suffocated.

"In this plight, from half-an-hour after eleven till near two in the morning, I sustained the weight of a heavy man, with his knees on my back, and the pressure of his whole body on my head. A Dutch sergeant, who had taken his seat upon my left shoulder, and a Topaz (black Christian soldier, usually termed subjects of Portugal) bearing on my right; all which nothing could have enabled me long to support but the props and pressure equally sustaining me all around. The latter I frequently dislodged by shifting my hold on the bars and driving my knuckles into their ribs; but my friend above stuck fast, and, as he held by two bars, was immovable.

"Towards two o'clock, finding I must quit the window or sink where I was, I resolved on the former, having borne, truly for the sake of others, infinitely more of life than the best of it is worth.

"In the rank close behind me was an officer of one of the ships, whose name was Carey, and who behaved with much bravery during the siege (his wife, a fine woman, though country born—'she is Mr. Orme's daughter,' whispered Mr. Holwell—would not quit him, but accompanied him into the prison and was one, as you know, who survived). This poor wretch had been long raving for water and air; I told him I was determined to give up life, and recommended his gaining my station. On my quitting, he made an attempt to get my place, but was supplanted. Poor Carey expressed his thankfulness, and said he would give up life too; but it was with the utmost labour we forced our way from the window (several in the inner ranks appearing to me dead, standing, unable to fall, by the throng and equal pressure round). He laid himself down to die, and his death, I believe, was very sudden, for he

was a full, sanguine man. His strength was great, and, I imagine, had he not retired with me, I should never have been able to have forced my way. I was at this time sensible of no pain, and little uneasiness. I found a stupor coming on apace, and laid myself down by that gallant old man, the Reverend Mr. Jervas Bellamy, who lay dead with his son, the lieutenant, hand in hand, near the southernmost wall of the prison.

When I had lain there some little time, I still had reflection enough to suffer some uneasiness in the thought that I should be trampled upon, when dead, as I myself had done to others. With some difficulty I raised myself, and gained the platform at the window a second time, where I presently lost all sensation: the last trace of consciousness that I have been able to recollect after my lying down was my sash being uneasy about my waist, which I untied, and

threw from me. Of what passed in this interval to the time of my resurrection from this hole of horrors I can give no account.

"After daybreak, some gentlemen still alive at the windows, finding all their efforts to induce the guard to open the door still ineffectual, bethought themselves that I might have more influence. Having discovered my body, and discerning signs of life in it, they endeavoured to bring it to the window, and Captain Mills (afterwards captain of the Company's yacht) had the humanity to resign his place.

"At this juncture," continued Mr. Holwell, "the Prince, who had received an account of the havoc death had made amongst us, sent one of his Jemmantdaars to inquire if the chief survived. They showed me to him, told him I had appearance of life remaining, and believed I might recover if the door was opened very soon. This answer being

returned to the Prince, an order came immediately for our release, it being then near six in the morning.

"As the door opened inwards, and as the dead were piled up against it, and covered all the rest of the floor, it was impossible to open it by any efforts from without; it was therefore necessary that the dead should be removed by the few that were within, who were become so feeble that the task, though it was the condition of life, was not performed without the utmost difficulty, and it was twenty minutes after the order came before the door could be opened. About a quarter after six in the morning the poor remains of one hundred and forty-six souls, being no more than three-and-twenty, came out of the Black Hole alive, but in a condition which made it very doubtful whether they would see the morning of the next day. Among the living was, as you know, Mrs.

Carey. The bodies were dragged out of the hole by the soldiers, and thrown promiscuously into the ditch of an unfinished ravelin, which was afterwards filled with earth." *

* The facts here given were made public in England, soon after they occurred, by Mr. Holwell himself.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CITY OF MUXADABAD.

Mr. Holwell's horrible recital filled me with indignation at the barbarity of the Moors, and I rejoiced that I had refused Law of Lauriston's offer of serving their Prince.

Our boats passed by the French settlement of Chandernagore; but no arguments or even bribes would persuade our captors to allow us to land or even send on shore to make inquiries. Therefore, Mr. Orme and I were rowed past the Fort of Orleans and the

Governor's great white house, without even hearing whether Cynthia was there or not.

That same night, after passing Chandernagore, our boats were moored on the opposite bank of the river, but not in French territory. We were but half-a-mile from it or less. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and I was a good swimmer, while the rushing tide was in my favour. As I looked on the river longingly, and in the direction of the French city, the temptation seized me to swim thither. I gave myself little time for reflection; taking off my coat, boots, and stockings, I made one plunge into the rapid tide, and found myself in the water, but also in the close proximity of a decaying corpse. The guard, thinking I was escaping, fired a hail-storm of match-lock bullets in the direction I had taken, but for-

tunately they mistook the dead body for the living, and I escaped unhurt.

The tide swept me, almost without will of my own, upon the point of a promontory on the other river-bank. I was thrown by an eddy upon some landing-steps, and found myself soon in the company of some Frenchmen, who had been attracted to the river-bank by the sound of musket-shots; one of them proved to be no less than M. Renault de St. Germain himself.

"Yours was the act of a madman," cried he, "for there is an under-current in that river which would swamp the best swimmer; however, you have been fortunately preserved."

"No," he said, in answer to my inquiries, "Mistress Orme is not here, and, indeed, sir, I am beyond measure anxious on her account. Neither has she reached the English at Fulta, and what makes me so

nervous for her is that this stream is infested with river pirates, who now, more than ever, carry on their trade during these disturbances. They generally kill the people and sink the boats they take, to remove all trace of their crimes. And a barge crowded with women and children and containing much treasure and jewels would excite their cupidity."

His words filled me with despair. The French Governor asked me to remain under his protection, but I refused, and I caused myself to be rowed back into captivity. I did not care to abandon Mr. Orme, for he was now very ill. My companions were fed only upon rice and water; they lay upon the floor of the open craft and were exposed alternately to the excessive heat of the sun and deluge of violent rain. They were loaded with fetters, and only escaped a putrid fever by breaking out in numerous

and painful boils. In consequence of these hardships Giles Orme had become most dangerously ill.

At length the guards, seeing he was at the point of death, allowed him to be conveyed to my barge, where my Gentoo benefactor had caused claret, spirits, and good food to be daily served me. Also a doctor was brought to us from a village; he lodged on my boat, and gave Giles Orme drugs and potions. Under this good treatment he began to mend. I, myself, lavished unceasing care upon him, for my dear lady's sake. I fanned him in the heat of the day, and placed wet cloths upon his fevered head, and hardly ever, night or day, left his side. When he became conscious and recognised me I was more than repaid by his saying: "I owe my life to your unceasing devotion, Nevill, and in happier

times I hope to be able to repay the debt I owe you."

Our journey by water took thirteen days.

At about four o'clock on the 7th July we arrived at Muxadabad; we were ordered on shore, and marched for a considerable distance through the town as a spectacle for the multitude. At length we were deposited under an open shed near the palace. Here, however, not only the chiefs of the French and Dutch factories, but the Arabian merchants, paid us every attention. It had been an equal marvel to me and to the other prisoners why I had been treated with so much consideration on the journey. I was much disconcerted on landing at Muxadabad to be robbed of all distinction, and treated like the other prisoners, which was badly enough, had it not been for the liberality of these foreign merchants.

On the 18th July the Nabob arrived, and

we then learned that he had intended to set us at liberty before he had left Calcutta, and that he was offended with his general for having ordered our hasty removal to Muxadabad. Notwithstanding this, he did not immediately release us, though it seems that his grandmother interested herself in us, and solicited our liberty. The next morning after the Nabob's arrival he came and listened to a petition from Mr. Holwell, with strong marks of compassion in his countenance, and then ordered our irons to be struck off, and ourselves to be conducted wherever we chose to go, without injury or insult.

Some "time-serving sycophants" informed him that Mr. Holwell, Mr. Orme, and others, notwithstanding their losses, were still possessed of enough to pay a considerable sum for their freedom. To this the Nabob nobly replied, "If they have

anything left, let them keep it; their sufferings have been great, and they shall have their liberty."

Mr. Holwell and his friends made arrangements to take a boat, descend the river to the Dutch settlement of Chinsurah, and afterwards embark for England. Here, then, was the immediate end of the episode of the Black Hole of Calcutta, so far as the fates of the chief persons in the tragedy were concerned.

From the shed in which we had been imprisoned, on the other side of the broad river, we could see a massively-built palace, which was the house of the General Meer Jaffier, and we heard that, although its owner was still in Calcutta, Mrs. Carey had been conveyed there.

Mr. Orme hoped by collecting a large sum of money to purchase her ransom, although he had been well-nigh ruined by

the sacking of Calcutta. Of the fate of his wife and children and of Mistress Patty we still could hear nothing.

Three days after receiving our freedom, on the 21st of July, I had arranged to travel with Mr. Orme by boat to Chandernagore, where we had a lingering hope we might find Cynthia and her step-mother, or at least hear news of them.

We were starting in the cool of the evening, and I was on the point of stepping into the boat, when an express messenger and some soldiers from the palace stopped me. They said that the merchants had received leave to depart, but that the general amnesty did not concern me, and that I was to remain in the city of Muxadabad, by special order from the Prince, and that Mr. Orme was also to be detained. What added to our vexation was that Mr. Orme feared he was detained to satisfy the

private malevolence of a creditor of his, with whom he had a quarrel.

Words can ill paint our anger and despair when we saw the boats containing our late fellow-prisoners float away from the wharf, our friends waving their handkerchiefs as a signal of farewell. Mr. Holwell, Mr. Burdett, and in fact all of them, promised us their interest to effect our deliverance, but I felt I could have wept bitterly when they had departed, and we were left alone in that great hostile Moorish city.

The emissaries from the palace made us understand that we were to follow them. I naturally supposed we were to return to the shed in the palace-yard, but that was not our destination. We were walked past the palace-gate.

Our guide, whom I first followed in all the apathy of despair, seemed to be conducting us through the endless streets of that great

town, which, in my opinion, is finer and larger than London.

If my curiosity could have been satisfied as to where they were taking us, and why we had been detained, I should have been interested in our expedition. Even now I recall that the air was marvellously balmy and serene, and that above us the stars glittered. Fires and lights gleamed among the huts of the people's dwellings, while the narrow streets were crowded with passengers and traffic.

The better houses were surrounded by walled gardens, and amidst the foliage majestic palms like funeral plumes stood forth against the lustrous sky.

We arrived in front of a brick house, with windows of wood-work carved in light tracery projecting from the upper story. The porter, a bearded Moor, dressed in coloured cotton and turban, with a lowly

salaam requested to be informed of our business. Our guide presented his missives of introduction, and speedily another Moor bearded like the first servant, but more magnificently attired in the same style, received us with equally low salaams. Ushering us across a courtyard lighted by little oil-lamps, and with latticed windows on the upper story, suggestive of feminine occupancy, he took us into a completely oriental and luxurious apartment, and while motioning me to be seated he gave orders to attendants respecting the disposition of my baggage. At this place Giles Orme disappeared, much to my dismay, and I was left unexpectedly alone in the stronghold of the Moors, namely, the city of Muxadabad.

But for my desires and anxieties concerning Cynthia, and my own fate, I should have derived extreme delight from the novelty of the situation in which I found

myself. The apartment was lighted by a cluster of little oil-lamps, mere wicks floating in coloured glass vessels, dependent from the roof. Around was a sort of raised dais, on which were cushions. In the centre mats were laid on the floor, while little tables of carved ivory or inlaid work stood about for the reception of coffee-cups, &c. The walls and ceiling were fashioned in elegant arabesques and painted, and there were shelves and cupboards of elaborately-carved wood-work on all sides.

I seated myself on the cushions, at the invitation of my host, who seemed a kind of steward, or upper servant, coffee and hookahs were brought, but no conversation ensued, as he spoke only the Moorish language, of which I was ignorant. Meanwhile a more substantial repast was being prepared, and I became perfectly—that is, comparatively—reconciled to my quarters.

Presently there appeared a pillau of fowl, garnished with spices, and other dishes, accompanied by wine, which my host seemed to have no objection to my consuming. The viands were spread upon the ground upon a tablecloth embroidered in gold.

Through an open lattice I could hear the gay babble of women and children's voices. I could not restrain a wish to become acquainted with the owner of the establishment, but of him there was no sign.

We afterwards reclined on cushions, under an alcove opening on the courtyard, to gain the benefit of the cool evening air, to which a little fountain imparted a sweet musical charm.

This was a relief, for the atmosphere of the inner apartment, comparatively cool when the fierce rays of the sun demanded exclusion, had become hot and stifling.

Finally I was ushered into a sleeping-room, where the evening breeze came in through the open lattices, and I fell asleep upon a small curtainless bed having silver feet, thinking of Cynthia.

In the morning I awoke very early. I looked round my singular but luxurious apartment, for surprise at my surroundings drove the desire for further rest from me. A tall and handsomely dressed Moor pushed away the heavy curtain, which took the place of a door in the room.

"Nevill," he said in good English, "I am rejoiced to welcome you to my house."

"Dalston!" cried I, "right glad am I to see you; but had you discovered yourself sooner I should have been saved some needless anxiety."

"I have to act with caution. I pass as an Arabian in this city. The English are in ill repute, and my wealth here might

be confiscated if my nationality were known."

"But, Dalston, why have you detained me here?"

"I want your services as a companion in my journey to the Great Mogul's court," said he.

"Heavens! but for your unkindness, I might be in the society of my dear lady."

"Your lady—always your lady. The same, the same old tale. Will you refuse to accompany me, and hasten back to Chandernagore, because of this bewitching Lady Cynthia?"

I was silent from vexation.

"Then know, oh most luckless youth, that the Lady Cynthia is in this house."

"Impossible! Good God!"

"It is gospel truth. And so are Giles Orme and his household, and even Mrs. Carey, the poor young widow."

"I am thankful that she has been rescued!"

"She has been saved for the present. Giles Orme's wife belongs to a considerable family in this place, and when they heard what had happened Cynthia travelled to this city, and from the influence of her step-mother's relations they have obtained permission for Mrs. Carey to remain with her own family, but whether she will ever return to Meer Jaffier's palace, that is a matter the Prince will decide when his general returns.

"The Lady Cynthia will shortly await you in the hall below; I will send some servants to attend upon you. Law of Lauriston has sent several carts, said to contain your honour's wardrobe, so that should you wish to change the Company's uniform I think you may find a more becoming attire in which to appear before the lady."

I gladly exchanged my dirty and worn red uniform for a handsome suit of white and gold, silk stockings, diamond buckle shoes, and a dress rapier, which were quickly unpacked from a valise, and, thus attired as my old self, the very Ravensthorpe of Ravensthorpe, I met Cynthia.

She received me in the hall of the house I had supped in the night before, and she was attired in pink silk brocade, flowered with silver, a dress which much resembled the one in which I had first seen her in Westminster. No words of mine can describe that meeting.

We spent that whole day together. Hours flew like minutes, we had so much to tell, so much to describe, so much to hope.

At six o'clock after dinner, "Come," said Cynthia to me, "it is now cool, and I will take you to my favourite seat."

I followed her through the broad straight

walks of Dalston's pleasure-grounds. It was evening, the birds sang gaily, the sun was setting brightly, and the cloudless sky above us was clear gold and orange.

Cynthia and I were soon seated in a Moorish pleasure-house of carved white marble, which stood upon the banks of a rushing river, upon whose bosom floated strange craft with large brown sails. The river at that place made a bend and spread before us as a seeming lake. In the distance, blue and misty, among the palm-trees, rose the towers and turrets of Meer Jaffier's palace, and in the extreme distance beyond lay the city of Muxadabad.

"It is here, dear Nevill," said she, "that I have feared for you, prayed for you, and have even despaired of ever seeing you again, and it is at this lovely spot that I would rejoice that you have returned safe and well."

I looked around me, on the beautiful river, and on the marble pleasure-house, and at the masses of rose and orange trees which scented the air.

"It is a fair spot, madam; but ah, Cynthia, any place where you are would be beautiful to me!"

"It is better than your prison, Nevill," said she, gaily, "now own it!"

"Hateful spot of misery and despair," cried I; "do not darken these blissful moments with recalling that wretched time."

"Know, dear Nevill, that it was I, through Mr. Dalston and Omichund, who brought you here, and 'tis I who had the boat furnished with all you might require."

"And in so doing, madam, you saved your father's life."

"Thank Heaven I have been able to undo some of the many wrongs I have done him. Had you ever reached the British fugitives

at Fulta, you would have encountered a deadly climate; while here, my dearest friend, you will be safe, well, and, I trust, happy."

"I am happy wherever you are, dear madam. But why this mystery? why did you not inform us you were here a fortnight ago?"

"My dear friend Mr. Dalston thought it wiser not. Indeed, we heard the Prince of Bengal was, beyond measure, incensed against Mr. Holwell and his companions. Mr. Dalston recommended the greatest caution, both for your sake and for ours. I in no way understand the Moors and their customs, and therefore considered it necessary to be guided by one so kind and so brave as he is. Mr. Dalston intended us all to meet on Dutch territory, but at the last minute I was so impatient to see you I overruled him, and made him bring you

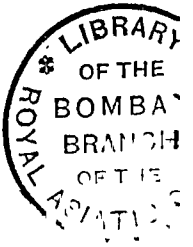
here, not being able to defer longer the happiness of seeing you again. I have been completely guided by Mr. Dalston, for, dear Nevill, ever since I have brought such misfortunes on those I love, I would, for the future, mistrust my own judgment."

"Madam, we have both been born in unfortunate times, yet we would both still prefer to suffer in the cause of loyal devotion, than join the too successful Whigs, whatever worldly advantages we might have gained by ratting. And now, dearest madam, let me renew that offer of marriage I made to you in Gloucestershire, and which you then made me the happiest of men by accepting, for now Mr. Giles Orme has withdrawn all objection to our union."

The joyful smile, deep blush, and glad look in Cynthia's eyes, then were my answer; for she was too moved for a minute

to speak. Although we were poor enough now, and almost prisoners in a hostile country, we were too happy in being reunited, and too overjoyed in being again affianced lovers, to give a thought to our future, however gloomy the outlook might be.

Ah, running river! Ah, hostile distant country! Ah, Paynim infidels of Muxadabad! nearer and dearer to me are you in far memory than Gloucestershire and Ravensthorpe, for there—in a far distant land—I won that lady who was my dear companion in this mortal life.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

VICTORY, 1757.

I HAVE railed at fate, and it must be owned that I, once heir of Ravensthorpe, had seen some of the ups and downs of life. They say that fortune becomes weary of persecuting a hapless mortal; be that as it may, certain it is that in the year 1757 her favours came upon me as quickly as her buffets had been showered upon me with unrelentless cruelty.

On the 8th August, 1756, I was married

to my sweet lady Mistress Orme, who was to me for thirty years the most constant, tender, and faithful spouse. Ah, happy day of our union, which took place in Dalston's Moorish house on the river's bank at Muxadabad. The ceremony of the marriage service was performed by the Rev. Herr Van Houstain (a Calvinist minister, who accompanied Giles Orme from the Dutch settlement, and a priest from Chandernagore). Cynthia's father and step-mother were present, and also Dalston. Two of the bride's sisters, pretty little misses in white frocks, acted as brides-maids.

Dalston's house (or rather series of houses), situated on the bank, overlooked a noble river. His estate was rendered quite private by high walls, which inclosed large groves also, and a wilderness of a garden, full of fountains, running water, rose-bushes,

and orange-trees, in full bloom. In this paradise we enjoyed as much air and exercise as the hot and exhausting nature of the climate of India rendered necessary to us. We also, on a barge, floated much up and down the river, but we avoided going into the city of Muxadabad, although I occasionally rode abroad with Dalston, but in Moorish attire.

Dalston, as I have said, passed as an Arabian merchant. The abolition of the monopolising Company had afforded him a good opportunity of increasing his wealth, nor had be been wanting in energy to avail himself of it. Relieved from the crushing weight of the Company's power at Calcutta, he had organised arrangements for conveying to Europe, in French and Dutch vessels, great stores of the gold brocades, muslin, and cotton fabrics, as well as the

spices and dyes, for which that city is so justly celebrated.

Ibrahim Khan (as he was called), in consequence of his princely way of trading, and his knowledge of the Arabic tongue, was well known and vastly popular among the mercantile community of Bengal, where he had been living as a free merchant for ten years. I enter into all this, for it was my connection with this singular man which caused my great fortune, and the figure I afterwards soon made in the world.

To his house all the men of note, both Gentoos and Moors in Muxadabad, used to come. Those who came most often were some very wealthy bankers, brothers of the name of Sett. The Gentoo, Omichund, continually visited him, and not unfrequently there came also Meer Jaffier, the Captain-General of the Moorish forces, and with him a handsome youth in his following, one

Yar Lutiff Khan, the finest swordsman and rider I ever met.

I may here mention, that the episode of Mrs. Carey had happily been settled by her remaining with her own family.

I had in England, in my youth, been a firm believer in the Divine right of kings, and now, at the age of twenty-seven, in Bengal, I had the greatest hatred of absolute authority and passive obedience.

I had changed my opinions from seeing the state of society in Muxadabad. The young Prince who lived and ruled there, though come of a brave and soldierly race, was frivolous and unjust, and his tyranny and the weakness of his mind made him equally feared and hated.

I heard much of this disaffection to the Prince, because Omichund and others frequently conversed with me on this subject, and so did Dalston, whose wealth and

position were only held at the good will of this boy, who, from his wayward caprices, was not to be trusted.

I little expected my fortune would be built up by the imbecility and misgovernment of Suraja Dowla!

This is how matters stood in the great city of Muxadabad; but Calcutta had, since its siege, been wholly abandoned by the English. In the Fort where I had suffered such a wretched imprisonment a mosque had been built by the Mahometan victors in the very court-yard of my prison. Giles Orme sagaciously spoke of the day when the English, under Clive, should return, rebuild the Fort, and restore British trade; but this was little credited by Dalston and me; nor was it ever believed for one minute by the merchants and bankers of Bengal, and still less by the numerous soldiery and the court of the Prince Suraja Dowla.

We heard, though, that a few English still lingered at the river's mouth in ships, but the account of them was not very reassuring as to their welfare. The name of the place was Fulta, some distance below Calcutta, on the Hooghly. Here the ships and the fugitives of Calcutta had ventured to remain as I have stated, and had not been again invaded by the Nabob.

A detachment of Adlercron's had been despatched from Madras, under Major Kilpatrick, immediately on the arrival of the news of the fall of Calcutta. But, as it only consisted of two hundred and thirty men, it was considered utterly insufficient to attempt the recapture of the settlement. They had consequently been encamped at Fulta; and they had suffered dreadfully from the effects of the hot, swampy, pestilential, district. Drink may have aided the deadly climate of that part of Bengal;

but if it threw men into fevers and liver complaints it would seem that, without it, they must have died of exhaustion. Whatever may have been the causes, more than half had perished, and of the remainder only thirty were fit for duty. Strenuous efforts, therefore, were being made to raise fresh soldiers.

In January 1757 Giles Orme determined to remove his whole family from Muxadabad, as rumours reached us that an avenging English force was shortly to be despatched from Madras. Dalston, alone, elected to remain at Muxadabad, for his whole fortune was engaged in his mercantile ventures.

We arrived at Fulta by a French ship; the weather was cooler then, and the climate more salubrious. We cheerfully ascended the ladder of the "Royal George," and gladly heard again the English tongue, and saw English faces; although the British

fugitives there assembled looked pale and sickly.

In Adlercron's regiment there were still a few privates and officers who recognised me, but, knowing that by birth I was a rich squire's son, they were not surprised to find me wearing a powdered wig, a handsome laced suit, and wearing a sword by my side, and married to a once wealthy merchant's daughter. I was now known for having fought well in the defence of Calcutta, and on this subject many complimentary things were said to me. Like all the other gentlemen, I enrolled myself as a plain volunteer.

On the 20th of December, the fleet, commanded by Admiral Watson, arrived from Madras. It should have consisted of four ships of war, a fire-ship, and five transports, conveying nine hundred Europeans and one thousand five hundred Madras Sepoys; but the ships had been dispersed by a storm,

and the "Cumberland," bearing the flag of Admiral Pococke the second in command, was missing, and also a transport conveying field artillery.

Mr. Drake, and others of the chiefs of the Company, were still pusillanimously anxious that Calcutta should not be attacked. They dreaded the vengeance of Suraja Dowla, and could not learn to place confidence in the resolution of Clive, notwithstanding his reputation, gained by his gallant and successful conduct in the South.

Among the volunteers in arms at Fulta was Mr. Warren Hastings, now so celebrated. But he was then young, and possessed of little influence in the Company's service. I remember observing with admiration his quick, bright eye, and intelligent smile, and the general activity and self-reliance of his manner. I believe, also, that he advised action, but much attention was not, as yet, paid to his counsels.

But Colonel Clive simply overrode the timorous counsels of the heads of the old factory, by landing and inspecting, at Fulta, the remnant of the first contingent from Madras and the recruits; and he then ordered us on board ship, with his own force.

I had heard enough of his reputation to regard him with great admiration and confidence as a leader. He was still quite a young man, under thirty, but he had broken the power of the French in the south of India, and caused the name of the British to be held in honour.

He was a born leader of men. In repose, his features looked somewhat lowering and heavy, but when his whole face lighted up with the fire of action the nobility of his martial spirit could be truly realised.

He had returned from a visit to England, having already accumulated great wealth, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in His

Majesty's service: and he had been appointed to the post of Commander-in-Chief in Bengal. He heeded not, therefore, any remonstrances on the part of the defeated and disheartened denizens of Calcutta. He forthwith ordered us on shipboard, and we proceeded up the river.

At this time one day a field officer, in full dress, touched me upon the shoulder.

"Colonel Clive has summoned you to his presence," said he.

"Conscience makes cowards of us all." I felt sure they were going to rake up the sad-enough incidents of my life,—the destruction of Upland Tower, the loss of the eight Hanoverian soldiers, and my escape from custody. I had now given a hostage to Fortune, and I dreaded that by imprisonment I should be separated for life from my wife—from my dear Cynthia.

I was conducted into the state-room of the ship "Thunder." There, seated around a table, were many officers I recognized with vexation some of the officers of Adlercron's regiment — even the commanding officer, Adlercron himself —but he seemed in no way interested in me; although Captain Eyre Coote's keen sharp eyes were fixed upon my face. I noticed, also, the pale aged features of Admiral Watson observing me with interest. However, standing up, wearing a splendid uniform, with a star on his breast, and decorated with the blue ribbon of some order, was Clive himself.

His hard, stern gaze was riveted upon my countenance, and I must own that I, like most men, felt ill at ease under his ominously searching and terrible glance. I have faced, since then, many battles and dangers, but never did my spirit quail as it did under Clive's look of fire; and this was

because I knew that my past life lay me under the power of the law.

"Your name?" he said shortly and sternly addressing me.

"Nevill Ravensthorpe, sir."

"You were once in Adlercron's regiment?"

"Yes," I faltered, "but I purchased my discharge with Colonel Adlercron's permission."

"We know that—since which you have been a spy in the pay of France?"

"By God! I never have been."

"You deny it?"

"As I hope to be saved, I deny it. 'Tis the basest falsehood."

"You have lived, sir, at Muxadabad, as a free merchant?"

"No, sir."

"Then with a free merchant, one Dalston?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are well acquainted with a Moor called Yar Lutiff, and with a Gentoo called Omichund?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I would confer with you privately," said Clive. "Gentlemen, you may retire."

Upon this, the officers, young and old, to the number of ten, left the cabin, and I was left with the young commander and Admiral Watson.

"Nevill Ravensthorpe," he said, "tell me if there is disaffection at Moorshadabad, the number of the Prince's troops, and what you know of their worth and quality; seat yourself."

I remained with them three hours; I drew sketches of the streets of Muxadabad; a plan of the fort of Calcutta; I told him all the details of the defence of that place; and answered the thousands of

questions Clive's active and clear mind dictated.

"You are a gentleman?" he said.

"By birth, yes—but a very unfortunate one, sir."

"You are now a plain volunteer?"

"Yes, sir."

"I can offer you the post of ensign in the Company's service, and will see that your future promotion is rapid. If I mistake not, you will make a good officer."

"And I, sir," I answered, "accept your generous offer with the greatest gratitude."

It was arranged, too, that I was to communicate the particulars of a plot to dethrone Suraja Dowla to Dalston, and that his house was to be the meeting-place of various disaffected persons in Bengal, and especially of the people of note in Muxadabad.

Quickly on this followed a series of glorious victories, planned and carried out

by the genius of Robert Clive. Success followed success with surprising rapidity; and in the following list of engagements I was present.

We left Fulta on the 27th of December, and we took the fort of Budge Budge on the 28th December. We regained Calcutta, without a battle, on the 2nd of January; the garrison, a weak one, abandoning the place. But a month later, on the 4th of February, we had a serious engagement with the army of Suraja Dowla, commanded by himself. He was defeated and retreated to his capital. We then took the town of Hooghly from the Dutch. The peace of Aix-la-Chapelle having come to an end, we bombarded the French settlement of Chandernagore, and drove the French from it on the 14th March.

On the 23rd June we fought the great and decisive battle of Plassy. I cannot

refrain from giving the numbers of this engagement. The English had but three thousand men, the Prince of Muxadabad had thirty-five thousand.*

We marched victorious into the city of Muxadabad on the 25th June.

The treasures the English took in that town have been computed to be three millions of our money. Colonel Clive's share alone was two hundred and eighty thousand pounds; Giles Orme received as his share thirty-four thousand pounds, and this in a great measure repaid him for his losses during the sacking of Calcutta. My share was no less than two thousand pounds.

As Colonel Clive had conceived a high

* During this battle the General Meer Jaffier deserted to the English side with fifteen thousand cavalry. This was one of the results of those negotiations secretly carried on in Dalston's house, and in promoting which I had been a subordinate agent.

opinion of me, I rose rapidly. One year after joining the East India Company's army I received the commission of a captain; while ten years later, as General Sir Nevill Ravensthorpe, K.C.B., I obtained the command of all the forces in the East Indies.

In the year 1787 my wife, my children, and I had returned to our native land. In the pump-room of Bath we met an old gentleman greatly crippled with gout—it was Squire Ravensthorpe.

He became very friendly to Cynthia, saying she was a monstrously fine woman, and took a fancy to my eldest son.

Squire Ravensthorpe died in 1790, and left me, by will, both his money and his estates. When Lord North's Ministry was in power I was created Viscount Ravensthorpe.

The great house of Buckland New Cross came into the market, and we purchased it; but to Ravensthorpe Hall, where my mother had spent so wretched a life, I never cared to return.

A few people remain, whose fates my grandchildren may care to learn.

Dalston married one of Cynthia's sistors, and returned to England a wealthy man.

The Gentoo, Omichund, as is well known, considered himself defrauded by Colonel Clive and the Council of Calcutta of a large sum of money. This so preyed upon his mind that he fell into a state of idiotcy and then died.

The General Meer Jaffier became Prince of Muxadabad, while Suraja Dowla was deposed and met with a violent death.

Mrs. Carey married again, and lived to a green old age

The fate of Diggory Hogben I never

learnt, but when I became wealthy I assisted his kindred.

Law of Lauriston, with forty Frenchmen from Patna, tried to save the life of Suraja Dowla, but they failed.

Law never became reconciled to me, calling me a turn-coat and a Whig. That I never was, only I could not bear arms against England.

Law died in poverty and obscurity in France, I have been told, but I never knew what really was his end.

THE END.

Westminster : Printed by Nichols and Sons, 25, Parliament Street.

00076372

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018